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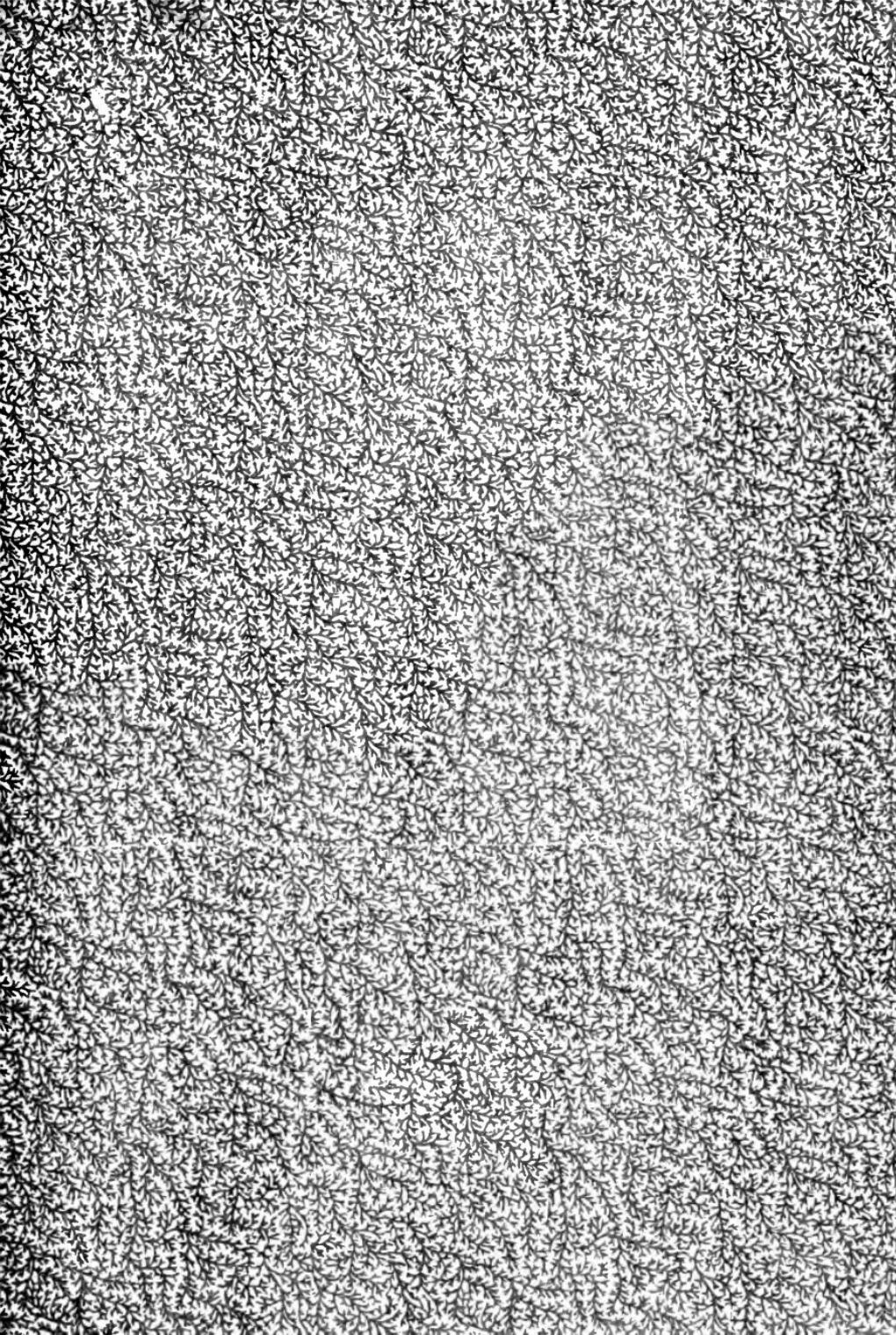
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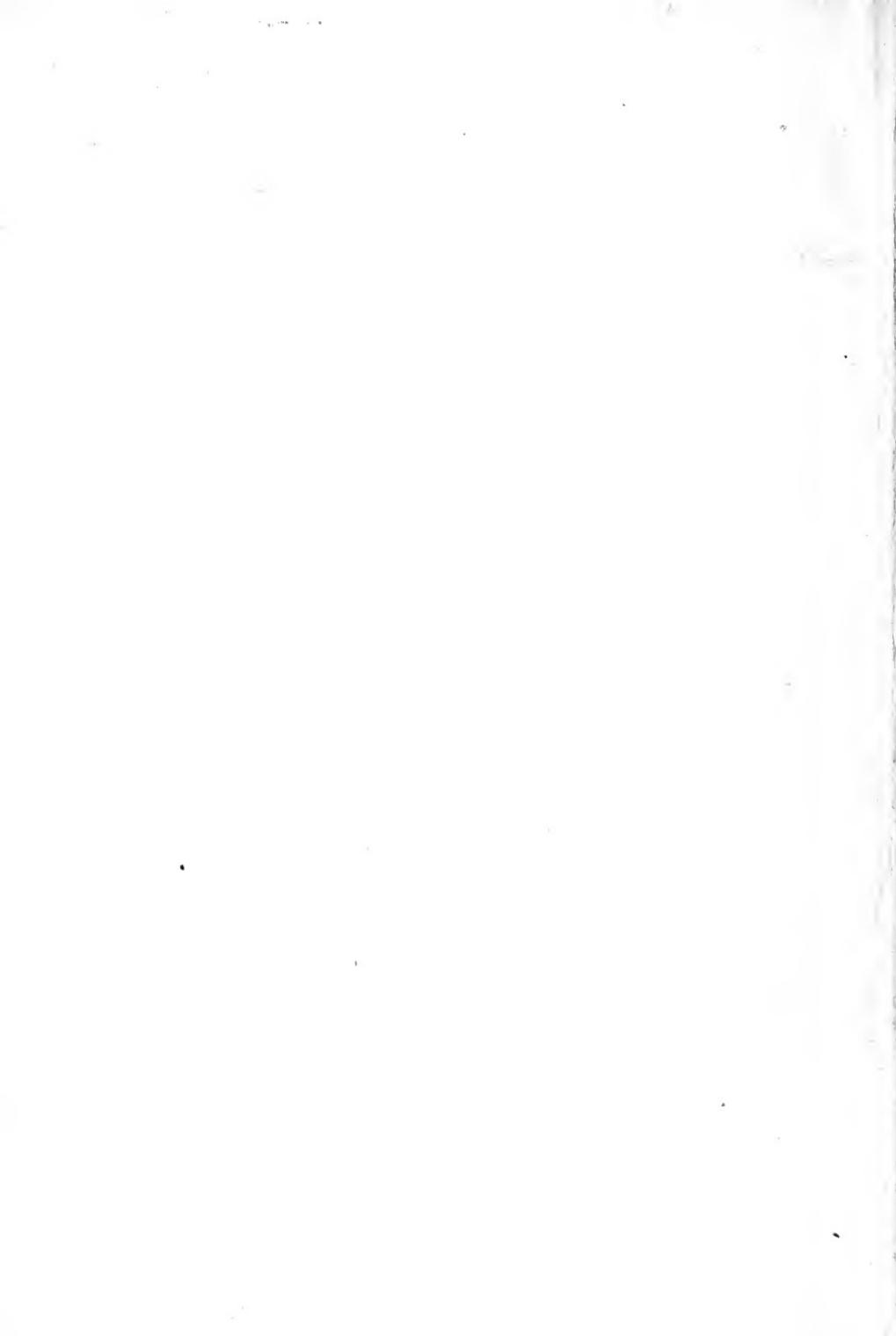


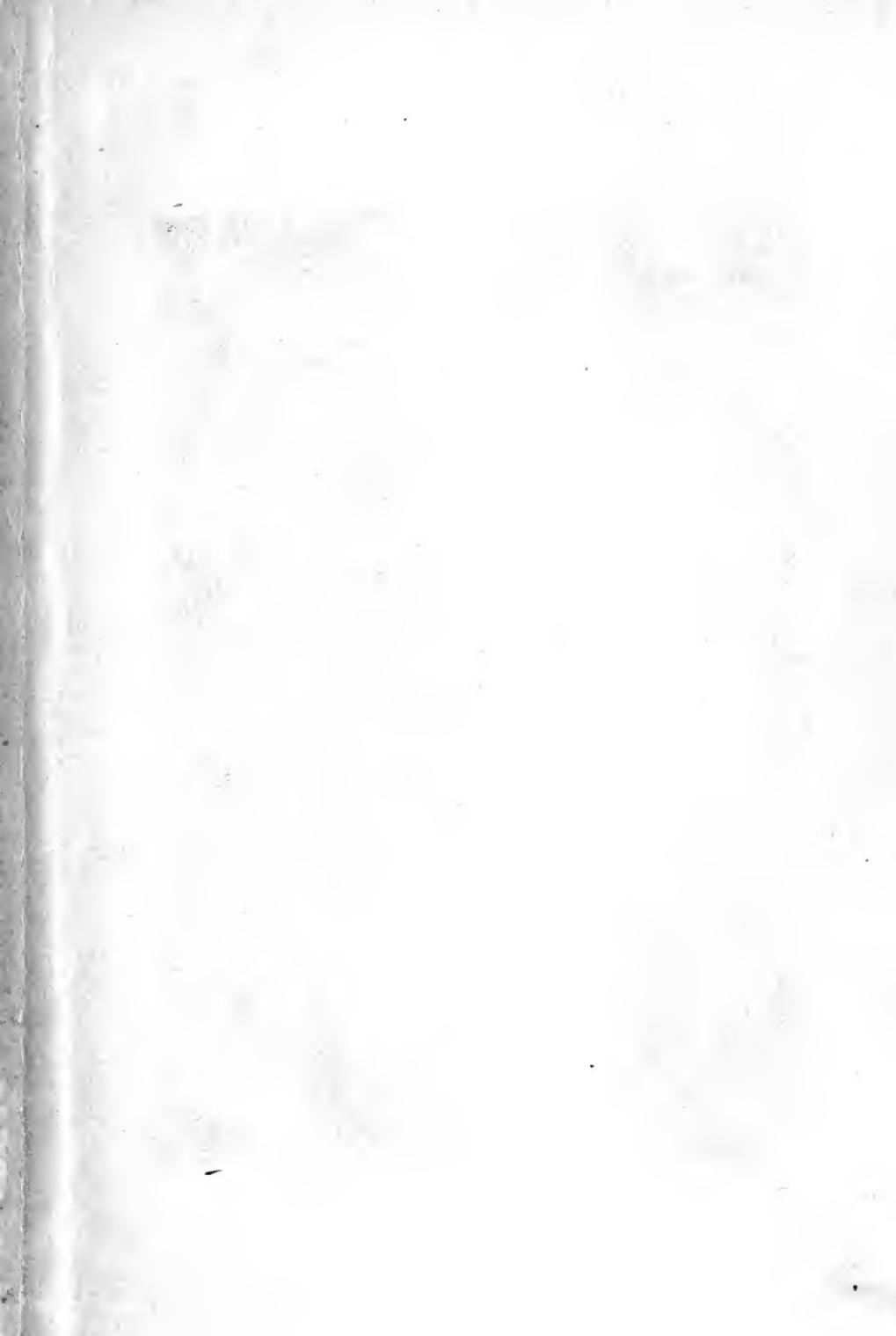


LES MISERABLES

COSETTE

VOL. II.







Edition De Luxe

LES MISÉRABLES

BY

VICTOR HUGO

Jean Valjean and Fauchelevent in the Convent Garden

Volume II
Frontispiece



Volume 2

COSETTE

Bigelow, Smith & Company
New York



Edition De Luxe

LES MISÉRABLES

BY

VICTOR HUGO



Volume 2

COSETTE

**Bigelow, Smith & Company
New York**

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COSETTE

BOOK I

WATERLOO

CHAPTER I

ON THE NIVELLES ROAD

LAST year (1861), on a fine May morning, a wayfarer, the person who is telling this story, was coming from Nivelles and proceeding toward La Hulpe. He was on foot, and following a wide paved road which undulates between two rows of trees, over a constant succession of hills that raise the road, let it fall again, and form, as it were, enormous waves. He had passed Lillois and Bois-Seigneur Isaac, and saw in the west the slate-covered steeple of Braine l'Alleud, which looks like an overturned vase. He had just left behind him a wood upon a hill, and at the corner of a cross-road, beside a worm-eaten gallows which bore the inscription, "Old barrier, No. 4," a wine-shop, which bore the following notice on its front: "At the sign of the Four Winds, Echabeau, private coffee-house."

About half a mile beyond this pot-house he reached a small valley, in which there is a stream that runs through an arch formed in the causeway. The clump of sparsely planted, but very green trees, which fills the valley on one side of the road,

COSETTE

is scattered on the other over the fields, and runs gracefully and capriciously toward Braine l'Alleud.

On the right, and close upon the road, was an inn, with a four-wheeled cart in front of the door, a large bundle of hop-poles, a plow, a pile of dry brush-wood near a quickset hedge, lime smoking in a square hole, and a ladder lying along an old shed with bins for straw. A girl was hoeing in a field, where a large yellow poster,—probably of a show at some fair,—fluttered in the wind. At one corner of the inn, an ill paved path ran into the bushes beside a pond, over which a flotilla of ducks was navigating. The wayfarer turned into this path.

After following for about one hundred yards a wall of the fifteenth century, surmounted by a coping of cross-set bricks, he found himself in front of a large arched stone-gate, with a rectangular moulding, in the severe style of Louis XIV., flanked by two flat medallions. A severe façade rose above this gate; a wall perpendicular to the façade almost joined the gate and flanked it at a sharp right-angle. On the grass-plot in front of the gate lay three harrows, over which spring flowers grew in a tangle. The gate had two decrepit leaves, ornamented by an old rusty knocker.

The sun was delightful, and the branches rustled gently as they do in May,—a rustle which seems to come from the nests rather than from the wind. A gay little bird, probably in love, was singing with all its might in a tall tree.

The wayfarer stooped and looked at a large circular excavation in the stone to the right of the gate, which resembled the hollow of a sphere. At this moment the gate opened and a peasant woman came out.

She saw the wayfarer, and noticed what he was looking at.

“It was a French cannon-ball that made it,” she said. And she added: “What you see higher up there on the gate, near a nail, is the mark of a large grape-shot, which did not penetrate the wood.”

“What is the name of this place?” the wayfarer asked.

“Hougomont,” said the woman.

The wayfarer drew himself up, walked on a few steps, and then looked over the hedge. He could see on the horizon through the trees a sort of mound, and on this mound something which, at a distance, resembled a lion.

He was on the battle-field of Waterloo.

CHAPTER II

HOUGOMONT

HOUGOMONT, that was a mournful spot, the beginning of the obstacle, the first resistance which that great woodman of Europe, called Napoleon, encountered at Waterloo,—the first knot under the axe-blade.

It was a castle, and is now but a farm. To the antiquarian, Hougomont is Hugo-mons; it was built by Hugo, Lord of Sommeril, the same who endowed the sixth chaplainship of the abbey of Villiers.

The wayfarer pushed open the door, elbowed an old calash under a porch, and entered a courtyard.

The first thing that struck him in this enclosure was a sixteenth century gate, which now resembles an arch as all else has fallen around it. A monumental aspect frequently springs up from ruins. Near the arch there is another gate-way in the wall, with key-stones in the style of Henri IV., through which there is a glimpse of orchard trees. Beside this gate-way a dunghill, mattocks, and shovels, a few carts, an old well with its stone slab and iron windlass, a frisking colt, a turkey displaying its tail, a chapel surmounted by a little belfry, and a blossoming pear-tree trained against the chapel wall,—such is this courtyard, the conquest of which was a dream of Napoleon. This nook of earth, had he been able to take it, might have given him the world. Chickens scatter the dust with their beaks, and you hear a growl,—it

is a large dog, which shows its teeth, and fills the place of the English.

The English behaved admirably here; Cooke's four companies of guards resisted the furious attack of an army for seven hours.

Hougmont, seen on the map, buildings and enclosures included, presents an irregular quadrangle, of which one angle has been broken off. In this angle is the southern gate, guarded by the wall which is within gun-shot. Hougmont has two gates,—the southern one, which belongs to the castle, and the northern, which belongs to the farm. Napoleon sent against Hougmont his brother Jerome. Guilleminot's, Foy's, and Bachelu's divisions were hurled at it; nearly the whole of Reille's corps was employed and failed; and Kellermann's cannon-balls rebounded from this heroic wall. Bauduin's brigade was not strong enough to force Hougmont on the north, and Soye's brigade could only make a slight breach on the south without carrying it.

The farm-buildings border the courtyard on the south; and a piece of the northern gate, broken by the French, hangs from the wall. It consists of four planks nailed to two cross-beams, and the scars of the attack are still visible upon it.

The northern gate, which was broken by the French, and which has had a piece let in to replace the panel hanging to the wall, stands, half open, at the end of the courtyard; it is cut squarely in a wall built of stone at the bottom, of brick at the top, which closes the courtyard on the north. It is a simple gate for carts, such as may be seen in any farmyard, with two large leaves made of rough planks; beyond it are fields. The dispute for this entrance was furious. For a long time all sorts of marks of bloody hands could be seen on the side-posts of the gate; and it was here that Bauduin fell.

The storm of the fight still lurks in the courtyard; horror is visible there. The incidents of the fearful struggle are petrified in it; people live and die there,—it was only yesterday. The walls are in the pangs of death; the stones fall;

the breaches cry out ; the holes are wounds ; the bent and quivering trees seem making an effort to fly.

This courtyard was more built upon in 1815 than it is now ; buildings, which have since been removed, formed in it redans and angles and corners.

The English barricaded themselves in it ; the French entered but could not hold their ground. Beside the chapel stands a wing of the castle,—the sole relic of the manor of Hougoumont,—in ruins, we might almost say gutted. The castle was used as a keep ; the chapel served as a block-house. Men exterminated each other there. The French, fired upon from all sides,—from behind walls, from garrets, from cellars, from every window, from every air-hole, from every crevice in the stone,—brought up fagots, and set fire to walls and men ; the reply to the musketry was a conflagration.

In the ruined wing you can look through windows, guarded by iron bars, into the dismantled rooms of a brick building. The English Guards lay in ambush in these rooms ; and the spiral staircase, cracked from ground-floor to roof, looks like the interior of a broken sea-shell. The staircase has two landings ; the English, besieged on the stairs and massed on the upper steps, cut away the lowest. They are large slabs of blue stone which lie in a heap among the nettles. A dozen steps still cling to the wall. On the first a trident is carved ; and these inaccessible steps are solidly set in their niches. All the rest resembles a toothless jaw. There are two old trees here,—one of them dead ; the other, which is wounded at the base, puts forth leaves again every April. Since 1815, it has taken to growing across the staircase.

Men massacred each other in the chapel ; and the interior, which has grown quiet again, is strange. Mass has not been said there since the carnage, but the altar has been left,—an altar of common wood upon a base of rough-hewn stone. Four whitewashed walls, a door opposite the altar, two small arched windows, over the door a large wooden crucifix, above the crucifix a square air-hole stopped up with hay ; in a cor-

ner, on the ground, an old window-sash, with the panes all broken,—such is the chapel. Nailed up near the altar is a wooden statue of Saint Anne, belonging to the fifteenth century; the head of the infant Jesus has been carried away by a shot. The French, masters of the chapel for a moment and then dislodged, set fire to it. The flames filled the building, and it became a furnace; the door burned, the flooring burned, but the wooden crucifix was not burned. The fire gnawed away the feet, of which only the blackened stumps are now to be seen; then it stopped. It was a miracle, say the country people. The Christ-child, which lost its head, was less fortunate.

The walls are covered with inscriptions. Near the feet of Christ is the name Henquinez; then these others, Conde de Rio Maïor, Marques y Marquesa de Almagro (Habana). There are French names with exclamation points, in sign of anger. The wall was freshly whitewashed in 1849, for the nations insulted each other upon it.

It was at the door of this chapel that a body was picked up, holding an axe in its hand; it was the body of Sub-Lieutenant Legros.

On leaving the chapel, you see a well on your left hand. As there are two wells in this yard, you wonder why this one has no bucket and windlass. Because water is no longer drawn from it. Why not? Because it is full of skeletons.

The last man who drew water from this well was Willem van Kylsom; he was a peasant who lived at Hougomont, and was gardener there. On June 18, 1815, his family took flight, and concealed themselves in the woods.

The forest round the abbey of Villiers sheltered the luckless country people for several days and nights. Even now certain vestiges, such as old burned trunks of trees, mark the site of these poor encampments among the thickets.

Willem van Kylsom remained at Hougomont “to take care of the castle,” and hid himself in a cellar. The English discovered him there; he was dragged from his lurking-place, and the frightened man was forced by blows with the flat of

a sabre to wait on the combatants. They were thirsty, and this Willem brought them drink ; and it was from this well that he drew the water. Many drank their last draught there ; and this well, from which so many dead men drank, was destined to die too.

After the action, the corpses were hastily interred ; death has a way of its own of harassing victory, and causes pestilence to follow glory. Typhus is an adjunct of triumph. This well was deep, and was converted into a tomb. Three hundred dead bodies were thrown into it, perhaps with too much haste. Were they all dead ? Legend says not. And it seems that, on the night after the burial, faint voices were heard calling from the well.

This well stands alone, in the centre of the courtyard ; three walls, half of brick, half of stone, folded like the leaves of a screen, and resembling a square tower, surround it on three sides, while the fourth, where the water was drawn, is open. The back wall has a sort of shapeless bull's-eye opening, probably made by a shell. This tower once had a roof, of which only the beams remain ; and the iron braces of the right-hand wall form a cross. You bend over and look down into a deep brick cylinder full of gloom. All round the well the lower part of the wall is hidden by nettles.

This well has not in front of it the large blue slab usually seen at all Belgian wells. Instead, there is a frame-work supporting five or six shapeless logs of knotty wood, like huge bones. There is no bucket, chain, or windlass ; but there is still the stone trough which carried off the waste water. The rain-water collects in it ; from time to time a bird comes from the neighbouring forest to drink, and then flies away.

One house in this ruin,—the farmhouse,—is still inhabited ; and the door of this house opens on the courtyard. Besides a pretty Gothic lock-plate there is a trefoiled iron handle on this door. When the Hanoverian lieutenant Wilda seized this handle in order to take shelter in the farm, a French sapper cut off his hand with a blow of his axe.

The old gardener, Van Kylsom, who has long been dead, was

grandfather to the family which now occupies the house. A gray-headed woman said to me: "I was here. I was three years old; and my sister, who was older, felt frightened and cried. I was carried away to the woods in my mother's arms, and people put their ears to the ground to listen. I imitated the cannon, and said, 'Boom, boom!'"

A door on the left of the yard, as we said, leads into the orchard.

The orchard is terrible.

It is in three parts,—we might almost say in three acts. The first part is a garden, the second the orchard, the third a wood. These three parts have one common enclosure,—near the entrance, the buildings of the castle and the farm, to the left a hedge, to the right a wall, and at the end a wall. The right-hand wall is of brick, the lower one of stone. You enter the garden first; it slopes, is planted with gooseberry-bushes, choked with weeds, and ends in a monumental terrace of cut stone with balusters. It was a seigneurial garden in the first French style that preceded Le Nôtre; now it is ruins and briers. The pilasters are surmounted by globes that resemble stone cannon-balls. Forty-three balusters are still erect; the others are lying in the grass, and nearly all have marks of musket-balls. One fractured baluster is placed upon its pedestal like a broken leg.

It was in this garden, which is lower than the orchard, that six light-infantry men of the first regiment, having got in and being unable to get out, hunted down and caught like bears in a trap, accepted combat with two Hanoverian companies, one of which was armed with rifles. The Hanoverians lined the balustrade and fired down from above, the infantry-men replying from below; six intrepid men against two hundred, and having no shelter but the gooseberry-bushes, took a quarter of an hour to die.

You climb a few steps and reach the orchard, properly so called. Here, within these few square yards, fifteen hundred men fell in less than an hour. The wall seems ready to renew the fight, for the thirty-eight loop-holes pierced by the Eng-

lish at irregular heights may still be seen. In front of the sixteenth are two English tombs made of granite. There are loop-holes in the south wall only, for the principal attack was on that side. This wall is concealed on the outside by a quickset hedge. The French came up under the impression that they had only to carry this hedge, and found the wall an obstacle and an ambush, the English Guards behind the thirty-eight loop-holes firing at once a storm of grape and bullets ; and Soye's brigade was dashed to pieces against it. Thus Waterloo began.

The orchard, however, was taken ; as the French had no ladders, they climbed with their nails. A hand-to-hand fight took place under the trees ; the grass was soaked with blood ; and a battalion from Nassau, seven hundred strong, was cut to pieces here. On the outside, the wall, against which Kellermann's two batteries were trained, is pock-marked with grape.

This orchard responds like any other to the month of May ; it has its buttercups and its daisies, the grass grows tall, the plow-horses browse, ropes on which linen is hung to dry occupy the space between the trees and make the visitor bend his head, and as you walk your foot sinks in mole-holes. In the middle of the grass you see an uprooted, out-stretched, but still flourishing tree. Major Blackman leaned against it to die. Under another large tree close by fell the German general Duplat, a French refugee belonging to a family that fled upon the revocation of the edict of Nantes. Close by, a sickly old apple-tree, poulticed with a bandage of straw and clay, hangs its head. Nearly all the apple-trees are dying of old age, and there is not one without its cannon-ball or bullet. Skeletons of dead trees abound in this orchard ; crows fly about the branches ; and at the foot of it is a wood full of violets.

Bauduin killed ; Foy wounded ; fire, slaughter, carnage ; a stream of English, French, and German blood furiously mingled ; a well filled with corpses ; the Nassau regiment and the Brunswick regiment destroyed ; Duplat killed ; Blackman

killed ; the English Guards mutilated ; twenty French battalions besides the forty composing Reille's corps decimated ; three thousand men in this castle of Hougoumont alone put to the sword, gashed, butchered, shot, and burned,— all this that a peasant may now say to a traveller, “ If you will give me three francs, sir, I will tell you all about the battle of Waterloo.”

CHAPTER III

JUNE 18, 1815

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If it had not rained on the night of the 17th and 18th of June, 1815, the future of Europe would have been changed ; a few drops of rain, more or less, caused Napoleon's downfall. In order to make Waterloo the end of Austerlitz, Providence only required a little more rain ; and a cloud crossing the sky at a season when rain was not expected was enough to overthrow an empire.

The battle of Waterloo could not begin till half-past eleven, and that gave Blücher time to come up. Why? Because the ground was moist, and the artillery could not manœuvre until it became firmer.

Napoleon was an artillery officer, and always showed himself one ; this marvellous officer was at heart the man who, in his report to the Directory after Aboukir, said : “ *Such a one of our bullets killed six men.* ” All his battle plans were arranged for projectiles. His key to victory was to make the artillery converge at a given point. He treated the strategy of the opposing general as a citadel, and breached it ; he crushed the weak point with grape-shot, and he began

and ended his battles with artillery. There was something of the sharp-shooter in his genius. To destroy squares, to pulverize regiments, to break lines, to destroy and disperse masses,—to him everything depended upon striking, striking, striking incessantly; and he confided this task to the artillery. It was a tremendous method, and, allied to genius, rendered this gloomy pugilist of war invincible for fifteen years.

On June 18, 1815, he relied the more on his artillery, because he had the superiority in numbers. Wellington had only one hundred and fifty-nine guns, while Napoleon had two hundred and forty.

Had the earth been dry and the artillery able to move, the action would have begun at six A. M. It would have been won and over by two P. M.,—three hours before the Prussians' sudden change of fortune.

How much was Napoleon to blame for the loss of this battle? Is the shipwreck due to the pilot?

Was the evident physical decline of Napoleon at that period complicated by a certain mental decline? Had twenty years of war worn out the blade as well as the scabbard,—the soul as well as the body? Was the veteran disastrously displayed in the captain? In a word, was this genius, as many historians of repute have believed, suffering eclipse? Did he go into a frenzy in order to conceal his own weakened powers from himself? Was he beginning to veer with every chance wind? Was he,—a serious matter in a general,—becoming unconscious of danger? Is there an age in this class of material great men, who may be called the giants of action, when genius becomes short-sighted? Old age has no power over ideal genius. With the Dantes and Michael Angelos, old age is increase; but is it decrease for the Hannibals and the Bonapartes? Had Napoleon lost the direct sense of victory? Had he reached a point where he no longer saw the shoal, divined the snare, or discerned the crumbling edge of the abyss? Could he not scent catastrophe? Had the man who formerly knew every road to victory, and pointed them

out with a sovereign finger from his lightning car, now a mania for leading the tumultuous legions harnessed to it to the precipice? Was he attacked at the age of forty-six by supreme madness? Was the Titanic charioteer of destiny now only a Phaeton?

We do not believe it.

His plan of action, all allow, was a masterpiece. To go straight to the centre of the allies' line; to make a hole through the enemy; to cut them in two; to drive the British half back on Hall and the Prussians on Tongres; to carry Mont St. Jean, seize Brussels, drive the Germans into the Rhine and the English into the sea,— all this was contained in this battle according to Napoleon; afterward, he would see.

We need hardly say that we do not pretend to tell the story of Waterloo here; one of the scenes of the drama we are recounting is connected with this battle, but the story of Waterloo has been already told and discussed in a masterly manner from one point of view by Napoleon, from another by a whole galaxy of historians. For our part, we leave historians to contend; we are only a distant witness, a passer-by along the plain, a seeker bending over the earth moulded of human flesh, and perhaps taking appearances for realities; we possess neither the military practice nor the strategic ability which authorize a system. In our opinion, a chain of accidents governed both captains at Waterloo; and when destiny, that mysterious culprit, comes upon the scene, we judge, like the people, that simple-minded judge.

CHAPTER IV

A

THOSE who wish to form a distinct idea of the battle of Waterloo, need only imagine a capital A laid on the ground. The left leg of the A is the Nivelles road, the right one the Genappe road, while the cross-line of the A is

the hollow road running from Ohain to Braine l'Alleud. The top of the A is Mont St. Jean, where Wellington is ; the left lower tip is Hougmont, where Reille is with Jerome Bonaparte ; the right lower point is La Belle Alliance, where Napoleon is. A little below the point where the cross-line of the A meets and intersects the right leg, is La Haye Sainte ; and in the centre of this cross-line is the exact spot where the battle was decided. It is here that the lion is placed,—the involuntary symbol of the heroism of the Imperial Guard.

The triangle formed at the top of the A by the two legs and the cross-line, is the plateau of Mont St. Jean. The dispute for this plateau was the whole battle.

The wings of the two armies extend to the right and left of the Genappe and Nivelles roads,—D'Erlon facing Picton, Reille facing Hill.

Behind the tip of the A, behind the plateau of St. Jean, is the forest of Soignies.

As for the plain itself, imagine a vast, undulating ground ; each slope commands the next slope, and all the slopes rise to Mont St. Jean, where they end in the forest.

Two hostile armies on a battle-field are two wrestlers ; it is a hand-to-hand contest. One tries to throw the other ; they cling to anything,—a bush affords a support ; the corner of a wall is an epaulement ; for want of a hut or two to shelter it, a regiment gives way ; an unevenness in the ground, a cross-path at the right moment, a wood, a ravine, may arrest the heel of that colossus called an army, and prevent its retreat. The one who leaves the field is beaten ; and hence the necessity for the responsible chief to examine the smallest clump of trees and investigate the slightest rise in the ground.

The two generals had attentively studied the plain of Mont St. Jean, now known as the field of Waterloo. In the previous year, Wellington, with prescient sagacity, had examined it as suitable for a great battle. On this ground, and for this duel of June 18, Wellington had the favourable posi-

tion, and Napoleon the unfavourable one; for the English army was above, the French army below.

It is almost superfluous to sketch here the appearance of Napoleon, mounted, and with his telescope in his hand, as he appeared on the heights of Rossomme at the dawn of June 18. Before we show him, all the world has seen him. The calm profile under the little hat of the Brienne school, the green uniform, the white facings concealing the decorations, the great-coat concealing the epaulets, the edge of red ribbon under the waistcoat, the leather breeches, the white horse with its housings of purple velvet, having in the corners crowned N's and eagles, the riding-boots drawn over silk stockings, the silver spurs, the sword of Marengo,—the whole appearance of the last of the Cæsars rises before every mind, applauded by some, and regarded sternly by others.

This figure has for a long time shut out all light. This was owing to a certain legendary dimness which most heroes evolve, and which always conceals the truth for a longer or shorter period; but now we have history and light.

That light called history is pitiless. It has this strange and divine peculiarity, that, all light as it is, and because it is light, it often throws shadows over spots luminous before; it makes of the same man two different phantoms, and one attacks the other, executes justice on it, and the darkness of the despot struggles with the lustre of the captain. Hence comes a truer proportion in the final judgment of nations; Babylon violated, diminishes Alexander; Rome enchainèd, diminishes Cæsar; Jerusalem slain, diminishes Titus. Tyranny follows the tyrant; and it is a misfortune for a man to leave behind him a night which wears his form.

CHAPTER V

THE QUID OBSCURUM OF BATTLES

ALL the world knows the first phase of this battle,—a troubled, uncertain, hesitating opening, dangerous for both armies, but more so for the English than the French.

It had rained all night; the ground was soaked; the rain had collected in hollows of the plain as in tubs; at certain points the ammunition wagons sank up to the axle-trees, and the girths of the horses dripped with liquid mud. If the wheat and barley laid low by this mass of moving vehicles had not filled the ruts and made a litter under the wheels, any movement, especially in the valleys, in the direction of Papelotte, would have been impossible.

The battle began late, for Napoleon, as we have explained, was accustomed to hold his artillery in hand like a pistol, aiming first at one point, then at another, of the battle; and he resolved to wait until the batteries could gallop freely, and for this purpose it was necessary that the sun should appear and dry the ground. But the sun did not come out; it was no longer the meeting-place of Austerlitz. When the first cannon-shot was fired, the English general, Colville, drew out his watch, and saw that it was twenty-five minutes to twelve.

The action began furiously,—more furiously, perhaps, than the Emperor desired,—with the French left wing resting on Hougoumont. At the same time Napoleon attacked the centre by hurling Quiot's brigade on La Haye Sainte, and Ney pushed the French right wing against the English left, which rested on Papelotte.

The attack on Hougoumont was, to a certain extent, a feint; for the plan was to attract Wellington thither, and make him swerve to the left. This plan would have succeeded had not the four companies of Guards and Perponcher's Belgian division firmly held the position, and Wellington, instead of

massing his troops, found it only necessary to send as a reinforcement four more companies of Guards and a battalion of Brunswickers.

The attack of the French right on Papelotte was calculated to destroy the English left, cut off the Brussels road, bar the passage for any possible Prussians, force Mont St. Jean, drive Wellington back on Hougoumont, thence on Braine l'Alleud, and thence on Hall; nothing could be plainer. With the exception of a few incidents, this attack succeeded; for Papelotte was taken and La Haye Sainte carried.

There is a detail to be noticed here. In the English infantry, especially in Kempt's brigade, there were many raw recruits; and these young soldiers valiantly withstood the well trained infantry. Their inexperience extricated them finely from their dilemma, and they did excellent work as sharpshooters. The soldier when thrown out as a skirmisher, being left to some extent to his own resources, becomes, as it were, his own general; and these recruits showed something of the French ingenuity and fury. These novices displayed dash, and it displeased Wellington.

After the taking of La Haye Sainte the battle wavered.

There is an obscure interval in this day, between twelve and four; the middle portion of the battle is almost indistinct and participates in the gloom of the fray.

A twilight reigns over it, and we perceive vast fluctuations in the mist, a dizzy mirage, the panoply of war at that day, unknown in our times; flaming colpacks; flying sabretaches; cross-belts; pouches for grenades; Hussar dolmans; red boots with countless wrinkles; heavy shakos wreathed with gold braid; the black Brunswick infantry mingled with the scarlet infantry of England; the English soldiers wearing clumsy round white pads for epaulets; the Hanoverian light-horse with their leatherne helmets, brass straps, and red horse-tails; the Highlanders with their bare knees and motley plaids, and the long white gaiters of our Grenadiers,— pictures, but not strategic lines; what Salvator Rosa, but not Griebeauval, would have revelled in.

A certain amount of tempest is always mingled with a battle, *quid obscurum, quid divinum*. Each historian traces to some extent the particular feature that pleases him in the hurly-burly. Whatever the combinations of the generals may be, the collision of armed masses have incalculable ebbs and flows; in action, the two plans of the leaders enter into each other, and their shape is destroyed. One point on the field of battle devours more combatants than another, like more or less spongy soils which soak up water more or less quickly. More soldiers must be poured out there than the leader wished. Unforeseen outlays. The line of battle floats and winds like a thread; streams of blood flow illogically; fronts of armies undulate; regiments as they advance or retreat form capes and gulfs, and all these shoals are continually shifting their position,—where infantry stood, artillery is; where artillery was, cavalry dash in. The battalions are like smoke; there was something there, but when you look for it, it has disappeared. The dark masses advance and retreat; a breath from the tomb impels, drives back, swells, and disperses those magic multitudes. What is a battle? An oscillation. The immobility of a mathematical plan expresses a minute, and not a day. To paint a battle, requires one of those powerful painters who have chaos in their brushes. Rembrandt is worth more than Vandermeulin; for Vandermeulin, exact as midday, is incorrect at three o'clock. Geometry errs, and the hurricane alone is true; and it is this that gives Folard the right to contradict Polybius. Let us add that there is always a certain moment in which the battle degenerates into a combat, is particularized and broken up into countless detailed facts which, to borrow the expression of Napoleon himself, "belong rather to the biography of regiments than to the history of the army." The historian, in such a case, has the evident right to summarize. He can only catch the principal outlines of the struggle; and no one narrator, however conscientious he may be, can fix absolutely the form of that horrible cloud which is called a battle.

This, which is true of all great armed collisions, is peculiarly applicable to Waterloo. Still, at a certain moment in the afternoon the battle began to assume settled shape.

CHAPTER VI

FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

ABOUT four o'clock, the situation of the English army was serious. The Prince of Orange commanded the centre, Hill the right, and Picton the left. The Prince of Orange, desperate and intrepid, shouted to the Dutch Belgians: "Nassau Brunswick, never yield an inch." Hill, fearfully weakened, had just fallen back on Wellington's forces, while Picton was dead. At the very moment when the English took from the French the flag of the 105th line regiment, the French killed General Picton with a bullet through his head. The battle had two bases of action for Wellington,—Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. Hougoumont still held out, though on fire, while La Haye Sainte was lost. Of the German battalion that defended it, forty-two men only survived; all the officers but five were killed or taken prisoners. Three thousand combatants had been massacred in that barn; a sergeant of the English Guards, the foremost boxer in England, and reputed invulnerable by his comrade, was killed there by a French drummer-boy. Baring was dislodged, and Alten put to the sword; several flags had been lost,—one belonging to Alten's division and one to the Lüneburg battalion, which was borne by a prince of the Deux-ponts family. The Scotch Grays no longer existed; Ponsonby's heavy dragoons were cut to pieces,—that brave cavalry had given way before the lancers of Bro and the cuirassiers of Tavers. Of twelve hundred horses, only six hundred remained; of three lieutenant-colonels, two were laid low,—Hamilton wounded, and Mather killed. Ponsonby had fallen,

pierced by seven lance-thrusts ; Gordon was dead ; March was dead ; and two divisions, the fifth and the sixth, were destroyed.

Hougmont attacked, La Haye Sainte taken, but one difficult point remained,—the centre, which still held out. Wellington re-enforced it ; he recalled Hill from Merle-Braine, and Chassé from Braine l'Alleud.

The centre of the English army, which was slightly concave, very dense and compact, was strongly situated ; it occupied the plateau of Mont St. Jean, having the village behind it, and before it the slope, which at that time was rather steep. It was supported by that strong stone house, which at that period belonged to the domain of Nivelles, which stood at the cross-road, and dated from the sixteenth century. It was so well built that the cannon-balls rebounded without doing it any injury. All round the plateau the English had cut through the hedges at certain spots, formed embrasures in the hawthorns, thrust guns between branches, and loop-holed the shrubs ; their artillery was ambuscaded under the brambles. This Punic task, incontestably authorized by the rules of war, which permit snares, was so well done that Haxo, who was sent by the Emperor at nine o'clock in the morning to reconnoitre the enemy's batteries, saw nothing of it, and returned to tell Napoleon that there was no obstacle, except the barricades blocking the Nivelles and Genappe roads. It was the season when the wheat is still standing, and along the edge of the plateau a battalion of Kempt's brigade, the 95th, was lying in the tall corn.

Thus assured and supported, the centre of the Anglo-Dutch army was in a good position.

The peril of this position was the forest of Soignies, at that time contiguous to the battle-field and intersected by the ponds of Groenendaal and Boitsfort. An army could not retreat without being dispersed, regiments would have been broken up at once, and the artillery lost in the marshes. A retreat, according to the opinion of several professional men, contradicted, it is true, by others, would have been a rout.

Wellington added to his centre one of Chassé's brigades removed from the right wing, one of Wicke's brigades from the left wing, and Clinton's division. He gave to his English,—Halkett's regiments, Mitchell's brigade, and Maitland's Guards,—as epaulements and counterforts, the Brunswick infantry, the Nassau contingent, Kielmansegge's Hanoverians, and Ompteda's Germans. He had thus twenty-six battalions under his hand; as Charras says, "the right wing deployed behind the centre." An enormous battery was masked by earth-bags, at the very spot where what is called the Museum of Waterloo now stands; and Wellington also had in a little hollow, Somerset's Dragoon Guards, numbering one thousand four hundred sabres. They were the other moiety of the justly celebrated English cavalry; Ponsonby destroyed, Somerset remained.

The battery which, had it been completed, would have been almost a redoubt, was ranged behind a very low garden wall, hastily lined with sandbags, and a wide slope of earth. This work was not finished, as there was not time to palisade it.

Wellington, restless but impassive, was mounted, and remained the whole day in the same attitude, just in front of the old mill of Mont St. Jean, which still exists, and under an elm-tree, which an Englishman, an enthusiastic Vandal, afterward bought for two hundred francs, cut down, and carried away. Wellington was coldly heroic; bullets rained about him, and his aide-de-camp Gordon was killed at his side. Lord Hill, pointing to a bursting shell, said to him, "My lord, what are your instructions, and what orders do you leave us, if you are killed?" "Do as I am doing," Wellington answered. To Clinton he said laconically, "Hold out here to the last man." The day was evidently turning badly, and Wellington cried to his old comrades of Vittoria, Talavera, and Salamanca, "Boys, can you think of giving way? Remember old England!"

About four o'clock the English line fell back. All at once nothing was visible on the crest of the plateau but artillery and sharp-shooters; the rest had disappeared. The regi-

ments, dislodged by French shot and shell, fell back into the hollow, which is now intersected by a lane leading to the farm of Mont St. Jean. A retrograde movement began; the English front withdrew. Wellington fell back. “The beginning of a retreat!” cried Napoleon.

CHAPTER VII

NAPOLEON IN GOOD HUMOUR

THE Emperor though ill, and suffering when on horseback from a local trouble, had never been in better humour than that day. From early morning his impenetrability was smiling; and on June 18, 1815, that profound soul, masked with marble, was radiant. The man who had been sombre at Austerlitz was gay at Waterloo. The greatest favourites of destiny offer these contradictions; for our joys are a shadow, and the supreme smile belongs to God alone.

Ridet Cæsar, Pompeius flebit, the legionaries of the Fulminatrix legion used to say. On that occasion Pompey was not destined to weep, but it is certain that Cæsar laughed.

At one o'clock in the morning, amid rain and storm, he explored with Bertrand the hills near Rossomme, and was pleased to see the long line of English fires lighting up the horizon from Frischemont to Braine l'Alleud. It seemed to him as if destiny, whom he had agreed to meet on a fixed day on the field of Waterloo, was punctual. He stopped his horse, and remained for some time motionless, watching the lightning and listening to the thunder. The fatalist was heard to cast into the night the mysterious words, “Agreed.” Napoleon was mistaken; they were no longer agreed.

He did not sleep for a moment; every instant of the past night had been marked with joy for him. He rode through the entire line of main guards, stopping every now and then to speak to the sentinels. At half-past two he heard the

sound of a column marching near Hougmont, and believed for a moment that it was a retreat on Wellington's part. He said to Bertrand, "The English rear-guard is preparing to decamp. I shall take prisoners the six thousand English who have just landed at Ostend." He talked cheerfully, and regained the spirits he displayed during the landing of March 1, when he pointed out to his grand marshal the enthusiastic peasant of the Juan Gulf and said, "Well, Bertrand, here is a re-enforcement already." On the night between June 17 and 18, he made fun of Wellington. "This little Englishman needs a lesson," said Napoleon. The rain became twice as violent. And it thundered while the Emperor was speaking.

At half-past three he lost one illusion; officers sent to reconnoitre informed him that the enemy was making no movement. Nothing was stirring, not a single bivouac fire was extinguished, and the English army was sleeping. The silence was profound on earth; there was no noise save in the heavens. At four o'clock a peasant was brought in by the scouts; this peasant had served as guide to a brigade of English cavalry, probably Vivian's brigade, which was on its way to a position on the extreme left, in the village of Ohain. At five o'clock two Belgian deserters informed him that they had just left their regiment, and that the English army meant fighting. "All the better," cried Napoleon; "I would sooner crush them than drive them back!"

At daybreak, he dismounted in the mud on the slope at the turn in the Plancenoit road, had a kitchen table and a peasant chair brought from the farm of Rossomme, sat down with a truss of straw for a carpet, and laid on the table the map of the battle-field, saying to Soult, "It is a pretty checker-board."

Owing to the rain during the night the commissariat wagons, which stuck in the muddy roads, did not arrive by daybreak. The troops had not slept, were wet through and fasting; but this did not prevent Napoleon from exclaiming cheerfully to Soult, "We have ninety chances out of a hun-

dred in our favour." At eight o'clock the Emperor's breakfast was brought, and he invited several generals to share it with him. While breakfasting, somebody said that Wellington had been the last evening but one at a ball in Brussels, given by the Duchess of Richmond; and Soult, the rough soldier with his archbishop's face, remarked, "The ball will be to-day." The Emperor teased Ney for saying, "Wellington will not be so simple as to wait for your Majesty." This was his usual manner. "He was fond of a joke," says Fleury de Chaboulon. "The basis of his character was a pleasant humour," says Gourgaud. "He abounded with jests more peculiar than witty," says Benjamin Constant. This gayety of the giant is worth dwelling on. It was he who called his Grenadiers "Growlers;" he pinched their ears and pulled their mustaches. "The Emperor was always playing tricks with us," was the remark made by one of them. During the mysterious passage from Elba to France, on February 27, on the open sea, the French brig of war, the "Zephyr," met the "Inconstant," on board which Napoleon was concealed, and inquiring after Napoleon, the Emperor, who still wore in his hat the white and violet cockade studded with bees, which he had adopted at Elba, himself laughingly took up the speaking-trumpet, and answered, "The Emperor is quite well." A man who jests in this way is on familiar terms with events. Napoleon indulged in several outbursts of this laughter during the breakfast at Waterloo. After breakfast he reflected for a quarter of an hour; then two generals sat down on the truss of straw, each with a pen in his hand and a sheet of paper on his knee, and the Emperor dictated the plan of the battle.

At nine o'clock, when the French army, echeloned and moving in five columns, began to deploy,—the divisions in two lines, the artillery between the brigades, the bands in front,—as they played the march, drums rattling and bugles braying (a powerful, mighty, joyous army, a sea of bayonets, swords, and helmets on the horizon), the Emperor, much affected, twice exclaimed, "Magnificent! magnificent!"

Between nine and half-past ten, although it seems incredible, the whole army took up position, and was drawn up in six lines, forming, to repeat the Emperor's expression, "the figure of six V's." A few minutes after the formation of the line, and in the midst of that profound silence, like that which heralds a storm and which precedes the battle, the Emperor, seeing three twelve-pounder batteries defile, which had been detached by his orders from the brigades of D'Erlon, Reille, and Lobau and which were intended to begin the action by taking Mont St. Jean at the spot where the Nivelles and Genappe roads cross, tapped Haxo on the shoulder, and said, "There are twenty-four pretty girls, General."

Sure of the result, he encouraged with a smile as it passed, the company of sappers of the first corps, which he had selected to barricade Mont St. Jean so soon as the village was carried. All this security was only crossed by one word of haughty pity; seeing on his left, at the spot where a large tomb now stands, the admirable Scotch Grays, massed with their superb horses, he said, "It is a pity."

Then he mounted his horse, rode toward Rossomme, and selected as his observatory a narrow strip of grass on the right of the road running from Genappe to Brussels, which was his second station during the battle. The third station,—the one he took at seven in the evening, between La Belle Alliance and La Haye Sainte,—is formidable; it is a lofty mound which still exists, and behind which the Guard was massed in a hollow. Around this mound the balls ricochetted on the bed of the road and reached Napoleon. As at Brienne, shot and shell whistled about his head. Almost at the spot where his horse's hoofs stood, cannon-balls, old sabre-blades, and shapeless rust-eaten projectiles, *scabra rubigine*, have been picked up; a few years a live shell, calibre 60, was dug up, still charged, and with its fuse broken off even with the bomb. It was at this last post that the Emperor said to his guide, Lacoste, a hostile and terrified peasant, who was fastened to the saddle of a hussar, and who tried at each volley of canister to hide

himself behind Napoleon, " You ass, it is shameful; you will be killed with a ball in the back." The person who writes these lines himself found, while digging in the sand on this mound, the remains of a shell rotted by the rust of forty-six years, and bits of old iron which broke like sticks of barley-sugar between his fingers.

Everybody knows that the undulations of the plains on which the encounter between Napoleon and Wellington took place, are no longer as they were on June 18, 1815. By taking from this mournful plain the material for a monument, it was deprived of its real surface, and history, disconcerted, no longer recognized itself; in order to glorify it, it was disfigured. When Wellington saw Waterloo two years after, he exclaimed, " My battle-field has been altered!" Where the huge pyramid of earth surmounted by a lion now stands, there was a hill sloping gently toward the Nivelles road, but which on the side toward Genappe was almost an escarpment. The elevation of this escarpment may still be measured by the height of the eminences on which two great tombs, which line the road from Genappe to Brussels, stand,—the English tomb on the left, the German tomb on the right. There is no French tomb,—for France, the whole plain is a sepulchre. Thanks to the thousands of cart-loads of earth employed in building the mound, which is one hundred and fifty feet high, and half a mile in circumference, the plateau of Mont St. Jean is now accessible by a gentle incline; but on the day of the battle, and especially on the side of La Haye Sainte, it was steep and abrupt. The incline was so sharp that the English gunners could not see the farm beneath them in the bottom of the valley, which was the centre of the fight. On June 18, 1815, rain had rendered this steep road more difficult; and the troops not only had to climb up, but slipped in the mud. Along the crest of the plateau ran a sort of ditch, whose presence it was impossible for a distant observer to guess.

What was this ditch? We will tell you. Braine l'Alleud is a Belgian village, and Ohain is another; these villages,

both concealed in hollows, are connected by a road about a league and a half in length, which traverses an undulating plain, and frequently buries itself between hills, so as to become at certain spots a ravine. In 1815, as to-day, this road crossed the crest of the plateau of Mont St. Jean, between the highways from Genappe and Nivelles; but it is now level with the ground, while at that time it was a hollow way. The two slopes have been removed to form the monumental mound. This road was, and still is, a trench for the greater part of the distance,— a hollow trench, in some places twelve feet deep, whose scarped sides were washed away here and there by winter rains. Accidents occurred there; the road was so narrow where it entered Braine l'Alleud that a wayfarer was crushed by a wagon, as is proved by a stone cross standing near the graveyard, which gives the name of the dead man as "Bernard Debrye, merchant of Brussels," and the date, "February, 1637."¹ It was so deep on the plateau of Mont St. Jean that a peasant, one Mathieu Nicaise, was crushed there in 1783 by a land-slide, as is proved by another stone cross, the top of which disappeared in the excavations; but the overthrown pedestal is still visible on the grassy slope to the left of the road between La Haye Sainte and the farm of Mont St. Jean.

On the day of the battle, this hollow way, whose existence there was nothing to reveal,— a trench on the top of the escarpment, a rut hidden in the earth,— was invisible, that is to say, terrible.

¹ D. O. M.

WAS CRUSHED HERE
BY ACCIDENT
UNDER A WAGON
M. BERNARD
DE BRYE MERCHANT
OF BRUSSELS THE (*illegible*)
OF FEBRUARY, 1637.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EMPEROR ASKS THE GUIDE A QUESTION

ON the morning of Waterloo, then, Napoleon was cheerful. He had reason to be so, for the plan he had drawn up was admirable.

Once the battle had begun, its various incidents,—the resistance of Hougoumont; the tenacity of La Haye Sainte; Bauduin killed and Foy disabled; the unexpected wall against which Soye's brigade was broken; the fatal stupidity of Guilleminot, who had no petards or powder-bags to destroy the farm gates; the miring of the artillery; the fifteen guns without escort captured by Uxbridge in a hollow way; the slight effect of the shells falling in the English lines, which buried themselves in the moist ground, and only produced a volcano of mud, so that the troops were merely plastered with dirt; the futility of Piret's demonstration against Braine l'Alleud, and the whole of his cavalry, fifteen squadrons, almost annihilated; the English right badly disquieted and the left much injured; Ney's strange mistake in massing instead of echeloning the four divisions of the first corps; a depth of twenty-seven ranks and a line of two hundred men given up in this way to grape-shot and canister; the frightful gaps made by cannon-balls in these masses; the attacking columns disorganized; the side battery suddenly unmasked on their flank; Bourgeois, Donzelot, and Durutte in danger; Quiot repulsed; Lieutenant Viot, that Hercules from the Polytechnic School, wounded as he was beating in with an axe the gates of La Haye Sainte, under the tremendous fire of the English barricade on the Genappe road; Marcognet's division caught between infantry and cavalry, shot down at close range among the wheat by Best and Pack, and put to the sword by Ponsonby; its battery of seven guns spiked; the Prince of Saxe Weimar holding, and keeping in defiance

of Count d'Erlon, both Frischemont and Smohain; the flags of the 105th and 45th regiments captured; the Prussian black Hussar arrested by the scouts of the flying column of three hundred chasseurs, who were beating the country between Wavre and Plancenoit; the alarming things which this man said; Grouchy's delay; the fifteen hundred men killed in less than an hour in the orchard of Hougoumont; the eighteen hundred laid low in an even shorter space of time round La Haye Sainte,—all these stormy incidents, passing like battle-clouds before Napoleon, had scarce disturbed his glance or cast a gloom over that imperial face. Napoleon was accustomed to look steadily at war. He never reckoned up the agonizing details. He cared little for figures, provided that they gave the total,—victory. If the beginning went wrong, he was not alarmed, as he believed himself master and owner of the end. He knew how to wait, and treated destiny as an equal. He seemed to say to fate, "You would not dare!"

One-half light, one-half shade, Napoleon felt himself protected in good and tolerated in evil. There was, or he fancied there was, a connivance, we might say, almost a complicity in his favor on the part of events, equivalent to the ancient invulnerability. Yet, when a man has behind him the Beresina, Leipzig, and Fontainebleau, it seems as if he might be distrustful of Waterloo. A mysterious frown becomes visible on the face of Heaven.

When Wellington retreated, Napoleon trembled. He suddenly saw the plateau of Mont St. Jean deserted, and the van of the English army disappear. It was rallying, but was out of sight.

The Emperor half rose in his stirrups, and the lightning of victory flashed from his eyes. If Wellington were driven back into the forest of Soignies and destroyed, it would be the final overthrow of England by France. It would be Cressy, Poitiers, Malplaquet, and Ramillies avenged. The man of Marengo would erase Agincourt.

The Emperor, while meditating on this tremendous issue,

swept the battle-field with his glass. His Guards, standing at ease behind him, gazed at him with a sort of religious awe. He considered, he examined the slopes, noted the inclines, scrutinized the clumps of trees, the patches of barley, and the paths. He seemed to count every tuft of gorse. He looked with some intentness at the English barricades,— two large masses of felled trees, the one on the Genappe road defended by two guns (the only ones of all the English artillery which commanded the extreme end of the battle-field), and the one on the Nivelles road, behind which flashed the Dutch bayonets of Chassé's brigade. He remarked near this barricade the old white chapel of St. Nicholas, which stands at the corner of the cross-road leading to Braine l'Alleud. He bent down and spoke in a low voice to the guide Lacoste. The guide shook his head with a probably perfidious negative.

The Emperor drew himself up and reflected.

Wellington had retired.

All that was needed now was to complete this retreat by an overthrow.

Napoleon hurriedly turned and sent off a messenger at full speed to Paris to announce that the battle was won.

Napoleon was one of those geniuses from whom thunder issues.

He had just found his thunder-bolt.

He gave Milhaud's cuirassiers orders to carry the plateau of Mont St. Jean.

CHAPTER IX

A SURPRISE

THEY were three thousand five hundred in number, and formed a front a quarter of a league in length. They were gigantic men, mounted on colossal horses. They formed twenty-six squadrons, and had behind them, as a sup-

port, Lefebvre Desnouette's division, composed of one hundred and sixty picked men at arms, the chasseurs of the Guard, eleven hundred and ninety-seven men, and the lancers of the Guard, eight hundred and eighty lances. They wore helmets without plumes and cuirasses of wrought steel, with horse-pistols in their holsters and straight sabres. In the morning the whole army had admired them as they came up at nine o'clock, with bugles sounding, while all the bands played "Let us watch o'er the empire's safety," in close column, with one battery on their flank, the other in their centre, and deployed in two ranks between the roads to Genappe and Frischemont, taking their place in that powerful second line so skilfully formed by Napoleon, which, having at its extreme left Kellermann's cuirassiers and on its extreme right Milhaud's cuirassiers, seemed to be endowed with two wings of steel.

The aide-de-camp Bernard carried to them the Emperor's order. Ney drew his sword and placed himself at their head, and the mighty squadron started.

Then a terrible sight was seen.

The whole of this cavalry, with raised sabres, with standards flying, and formed in columns by divisions, descended, with one movement and as one man, with the precision of a bronze battering-ram opening a breach, the hill of La Belle Alliance. They entered the dreadful valley in which so many men had already fallen, disappeared in the smoke, and then, emerging from the gloom, re-appeared on the other side, still in a close, compact column, mounting at a full trot, under a tremendous fire of grape-shot, the frightful muddy incline of the plateau of Mont St. Jean. They descended it, stern, threatening, and imperturbable. In the intervals between the artillery and musketry fire, their colossal tramp was heard. As they formed two divisions, they were in two columns. Wathier's division was on the right, Delord's on the left. It seemed as if two immense steel snakes were crawling toward the crest of the plateau. They traversed the battle-field like a flash.

Nothing like it had been seen since the capture of the great redoubt of the Moskowa by the heavy cavalry. Murat was missing, but Ney was there. It seemed as if this mass had become a monster, and had but one soul. Each squadron undulated and swelled like the rings of a polypus. They were seen through a vast cloud of smoke which was rent asunder at intervals. It was a pell-mell of helmets, shouts, and sabres, a stormy heaving of horses among cannon, and flourish of trumpets,—a disciplined and terrible array; while above it all flashed the cuirasses like the scales of the dragon.

Such narratives seem to belong to another age. Something like this vision is doubtless traceable in the old Orphic epics describing the centaurs, the ancient hippanthropists,—those Titans with human face and equestrian chest, who scaled Olympus at a gallop,—horrible, invulnerable, sublime; gods and brutes.

It was a curious numerical coincidence that twenty-six battalions were preparing to receive the charge of these twenty-six squadrons. Behind the crest of the plateau, in the shadow of the masked battery, the English infantry formed in thirteen squares, each of two battalions, and two deep, with seven men in the first line and six in the second, were waiting, calm, mute, and motionless, with their muskets on their shoulders, for what was coming. They did not see the cuirassiers, and the cuirassiers did not see them. They merely heard this rising tide of men. They heard the swelling sound of three thousand horses, the alternating and symmetrical tramp of their hoofs, the clang of the cuirasses, the clash of the sabres, and a sort of savage breathing. There was a long and terrible silence; then a long file of uplifted arms brandishing sabres, with helmets, bugles, and standards, and three thousand heads with gray mustaches, shouting, “Long live the Emperor!” appeared above the crest. The whole of this cavalry debouched on the plateau; it was like the beginning of an earthquake.

All at once, terrible to relate, the head of the column of cuirassiers facing the English left reared up with a fearful

clamour. On reaching the culminating point of the crest, furious and eager to make their exterminating dash on the English squares and guns, the cuirassiers saw between them and the English a trench, a grave. It was the hollow road of Ohain.

It was a frightful moment; the ravine was there, unexpected, yawning, almost precipitous, directly beneath the horses' feet, and with a depth of twelve feet.

The second rank thrust the first into the abyss. The horses reared, fell back, slipped with all four feet in the air, throwing and crushing their riders. There was no means of escape. The entire column was one huge projectile. The force acquired to crush the English crushed the French; and the inexorable ravine would not yield till it was filled. Men and horses rolled into it pell-mell, crushing each other, and making one vast charnel-house of this gulf; when the grave was full of living men, the rest passed over them. Nearly one-third of Dubois's men rolled into the abyss.

This began the loss of the battle.

A local tradition, which evidently exaggerates, says that two thousand horses and fifteen hundred men were buried in the hollow way of Ohain. These figures probably comprise the other corpses cast into the ravine on the day after the battle.

Let us note in passing, that it was this Dubois brigade which, charging alone an hour earlier, had taken the standard of the Lunenburg battalion.

Napoleon, before ordering this charge, had surveyed the ground, but was unable to see this hollow way, which did not form even a ripple on the crest of the plateau. Warned, however, by the little white chapel which marks its juncture with the Nivelles road, he had asked Lacoste a question,—probably as to whether there was any obstacle. The guide answered no; and we might almost say that Napoleon's catastrophe was brought about by a peasant's shake of the head.

Other fatalities were yet to arise.

Was it possible for Napoleon to win the battle? We an-

swer in the negative. Why? On account of Wellington? on account of Blücher? No; on account of God.

Bonaparte, victor at Waterloo, would not harmonize with the law of the nineteenth century. Another series of facts was preparing, in which Napoleon no longer had a place. The ill-will of events had been displayed long before.

It was time for this vast man to fall.

His excessive weight in human destiny disturbed the balance. This individual alone was of more account than the universal group. Such plethoras of human vitality concentrated in a single head,—the world mounting to one man's brain,—would be fatal to civilization if they endured. The moment had come for the incorruptible and supreme equity to reflect; and it is probable that the principles and elements on which the regular gravitations of the moral order as well as of the material order depend, had rebelled. Steaming blood, overcrowded graveyards, mothers in tears, are formidable pleaders. When the earth suffers from an excessive burden, there are mysterious groans from the shadow, which the abyss hears.

Napoleon had been denounced in the infinite, and his fall was decided.

He troubled God.

Waterloo is not a battle, but a change of front on the part of the universe.

CHAPTER X

THE PLATEAU OF MONT ST. JEAN

THE battery was unmasked simultaneously with the ravine.

Sixty cannon and thirteen squares thundered at the cuirassiers at point-blank range. The intrepid General Delord gave a military salute to the English battery.

The whole of the English field artillery had entered the squares at a gallop. The cuirassiers had not even a moment for reflection. The disaster of the hollow way had decimated but not discouraged them. They were of that class of men whose courage increases as their number diminishes.

Wathier's column alone suffered in the disaster; but Delord's column, which Ney had ordered to wheel to the left, as if he suspected the trap, arrived entire.

The cuirassiers fell upon the English squares at full gallop, with bridles loose, sabres in their teeth, and pistols in their hands.

There are moments in a battle when the soul hardens a man, so that it changes the soldier into a statue, and all flesh becomes granite. The English battalions, though fiercely assailed, did not move.

Then there was a frightful scene.

All sides of the English squares were attacked simultaneously, and a frenzied whirl surrounded them; but the infantry remained impassive. The front rank, kneeling, received the cuirassiers on their bayonets, while the second fired at them. Behind the second rank the artillery-men loaded their guns; the front of the square opened to let a volley of shell pass, and then closed again. The cuirassiers responded by attempts to crush their foe. Their great horses reared, leaped over the bayonets, and landed in the centre of the four living walls. The cannon-balls made gaps in the cuirassiers, and the cuirassiers made breaches in the squares. Files of men disappeared, trampled down by the horses; bayonets were buried in the entrails of these centaurs. Hence arose horrible wounds, such as were probably never seen elsewhere. The squares, where broken by the impetuous cavalry, closed up without yielding an inch of ground. Inexhaustible in canister, they produced an explosion in the midst of the assailants. The aspect of this combat was monstrous. Those squares were no longer battalions, but craters. Whose cuirassiers were no longer cavalry, but a

tempest,— each square was a volcano attacked by a storm. The lava combated the lightning.

The extreme right square, the most exposed of all, as it was in the air, was nearly annihilated in the first attack. It was formed of the 75th Highlanders. The piper in the centre, while his comrades were being exterminated around him, sat on a drum, with his bagpipe under his arm, playing mountain airs, his sad eyes downcast and filled with images of forest and lakes, wholly lost to what went on around him. These Scotchmen died thinking of Ben Lothian, as the Greeks did, remembering Argos. A cuirassier's sabre, cutting through the pipe and the arm that held it, stopped the tune by killing the player.

The cuirassiers, relatively few in number, and reduced by the catastrophe of the ravine, had against them nearly the whole English army; but they multiplied themselves, and each man was worth ten. Some Hanoverian battalions, however, gave way. Wellington saw it, and thought of his cavalry. Had Napoleon at this minute thought of his infantry, the battle would have been won; and this forgetfulness was his great and fatal error.

All at once the cuirassiers, who had been the assailants, found themselves assailed. The English cavalry was at their back. Before them the squares, behind them Somerset, with fourteen hundred dragoons of the Guards. Somerset had on his right, Dornberg with the German light horse, and on his left, Trip with the Belgian carbineers. The cuirassiers, attacked on the flank and in front, before and behind, by infantry and cavalry, were compelled to make a stand on all sides. But what did they care? They were a whirlwind; their bravery was indescribable.

In addition, they had behind them the battery, which still thundered; and it was only in such a way that these men could be wounded in the back. One of their cuirasses, with a hole through the left scapula, is in the Waterloo Museum.

For such Frenchmen, nothing less than such Englishmen were required.

It was no longer a battle; it was a shadow, a headlong fury, a dizzy transport of souls and courage, a hurricane of flashing swords. In an instant the fourteen hundred dragoons were only eight hundred, and Fuller, their lieutenant-colonel, fell dead. Ney dashed up with Lefebvre Desnouëtte's lancers and chasseurs. The plateau of Mont St. Jean was taken, retaken, and taken again. The cuirassiers left the cavalry to attack the infantry, or, to speak more correctly, the whole dreadful mob collared each the other, and none loosed their hold. The squares still held out after twelve assaults.

Ney had four horses killed under him, and one-half of the cuirassiers remained on the plateau. This struggle lasted two hours.

The English army was profoundly shaken; and there is no doubt that, had not the cuirassiers been weakened in their first onslaught by the disaster of the hollow way, they would have broken through the centre and decided the victory. This extraordinary cavalry petrified Clinton, who had seen Talavera and Badajoz. Wellington, three parts vanquished, admired heroically. He said in a low voice, "Sublime!"

The cuirassiers annihilated seven squares out of thirteen, captured or spiked sixty guns, and took six English regimental flags, which three cuirassiers and three chasseurs of the Guard carried to the Emperor at the farm of La Belle Alliance.

Wellington's situation had grown worse. This strange battle resembled a fight between two savage wounded men, who constantly lose blood while continuing the struggle. Which would be the first to fall?

The combat for the plateau continued.

How far did the cuirassiers get? No one could say; but it is certain that on the day after the battle a cuirassier and his horse were found dead on the weighing-machine at Mont St. Jean, at the very spot where the Nivelles, Genappe, La Hulpe, and Brussels roads meet. This horseman had pierced the English lines. One of the men who picked up this corpse

still lives at Mont St. Jean. His name is Dehaze, and he was eighteen years of age at the time.

Wellington felt himself giving way, and the crisis was close at hand.

The cuirassiers had not succeeded, since the English centre had not been broken. Everybody having possession of the plateau, nobody held it; but in the end the greater portion remained in the hands of the English. Wellington held the village and the plain; Ney only the crest and the slope. Both sides seemed to have taken root in this fatal soil.

But the weakening of the English seemed irremediable, for the hemorrhage of their army was horrible. Kempt, on the left wing, asked for re-enforcements. "There are none," Wellington replied. Almost at the same moment, by a strange coincidence, which depicts the exhaustion of both armies, Ney asked Napoleon for infantry; and Napoleon answered, "Infantry? Where does he expect me to get it? Does he think I can create it?"

Still, the English army was the worse off of the two. The furious attacks of those great squadrons, with their iron cuirassiers and breasts of steel, had ground their infantry into powder. A few men clustered round the colours marked the place of a regiment; and some battalions were commanded only by a captain or a lieutenant. Alten's division, already so maltreated at La Haye Sainte, was nearly destroyed. The intrepid Belgians of Van Kluzé's brigade lay among the wheat along the Nivelles road. Hardly any were left of those Dutch Grenadiers, who, in 1811, fought Wellington in Spain, on the French side, and who, in 1815, joined the English and fought Napoleon. The loss in officers was considerable. Lord Uxbridge, whose leg was buried the next day, had a fractured knee. If on the side of the French in this contest of the cuirassiers, Delord, L'Heretier, Colbert, Dnop, Travers, and Blancard were disabled, on the side of the English, Alten was wounded, Barnes was wounded, De lancey killed, Van Meeren killed, Ompteda killed, Wellington's staff decimated; and England's share was the worse

in this bloody balance. The second regiment of foot-guards had lost five lieutenant-colonels, four captains, and three ensigns; the first battalion of the 30th infantry had lost twenty-four officers and one hundred and twelve men; the 79th Highlanders had twenty-four officers wounded, and eighteen officers and four hundred and fifty men killed. Cumberland's Hanoverian Hussars, an entire regiment, with Colonel Hacke at their head, who, at a later date was tried and cashiered, turned bridle during the fight, and fled into the forest of Soignies, spreading the rout as far as Brussels. The wagons, ammunition trains, baggage trains, and ambulance carts full of wounded, seeing that the French were gaining ground and approaching the forest, rushed into it. The Dutch, put to the sword by the French cavalry, broke in confusion. From Vert Coucou to Groenendael, a distance of two leagues on the Brussels road, there was, according to the testimony of living witnesses, a dense crowd of fugitives; and the panic was so great that it assailed the Prince of Condé at Mechlin and Louis XVIII. at Ghent. With the exception of the weak reserve echeloned behind the field hospital established at the farm of Mont St. Jean, and Vivian's and Vandeleur's brigades, which flanked the left wing, Wellington had no cavalry left; and many of the guns lay dismounted. These facts are admitted by Siborne; and Pringle, exaggerating the danger, goes so far as to state that the Anglo-Dutch army was reduced to thirty-four thousand men. The Iron Duke remained firm, but his lips blanched. The Austrian commissioner Vincent, and the Spanish commissioner Alava, who were present at the battle, thought the Duke lost. At five o'clock Wellington looked at his watch, and was heard to mutter, "Blücher or night."

It was at this moment that a distant line of bayonets glistened on the heights in the direction of Frischemont.

This was the climax of the gigantic drama.

CHAPTER XI

A BAD GUIDE TO NAPOLEON; A GOOD GUIDE TO BÜLOW

EVERYBODY knows Napoleon's awful mistake; Grouchy expected, Blücher coming up, death instead of life. Destiny has such turns as this. Men expect the throne of the world, and perceive St. Helena.

If the little shepherd who served as guide to Bülow, Blücher's lieutenant, had advised him to debouch from the forest above Frischemont, instead of below Plancenoit, the form of the nineteenth century might perhaps have been different; for Napoleon would have won the battle of Waterloo. By any other road than that below Plancenoit, the Prussian army would have come out upon a ravine impassable by artillery, and Bülow would not have arrived.

Now, one hour's delay — the Prussian general Muffling declares — and Blücher would not have found Wellington on his feet; "the battle was lost."

It was high time, as we see, for Bülow to arrive; and as it was, he had been greatly delayed. He had bivouacked at Dion-le-Mont, and started at daybreak; but the roads were impassable, and his divisions stuck in the mud. The ruts came up to the hubs of the cannon. Moreover, he was compelled to cross the Dyle by the narrow bridge at Wavre. The street leading to the bridge had been burned by the French; and artillery wagons and caissons, which could not pass between the two rows of blazing houses, were forced to wait till the fire was extinguished. By midday, Bülow's vanguard had scarce reached Chapelle St. Lambert.

Had the action begun two hours sooner, it would have been over at four o'clock, and Blücher would have fallen upon the battle gained by Napoleon. Such are the vast hazards portioned out by an Infinite Providence which we cannot comprehend.

At midday the Emperor was the first to notice, through his field-glass, on the extreme horizon, something which fixed his attention, and he said, "I see a cloud yonder which looks to me like troops." Then he asked the Duke of Dalmatia: "Soult, what do you see in the direction of Chapelle St. Lambert?" The marshal, after looking through his glass, replied, "Four or five thousand men, sire." It was evidently Grouchy. But they remained motionless in the mist. All the staff examined "the cloud" pointed out by the Emperor; and some said, "They are columns halting," but the majority were of opinion that they were trees. The truth is that the cloud did not move. The Emperor detached Domon's division of light cavalry to reconnoitre in the direction of this obscure point.

Bülow, in fact, had not stirred; for his vanguard was very weak, and could effect nothing. He was obliged to wait for the main body of the army, and had orders to concentrate his forces before forming into line; but at five o'clock, Blücher, seeing Wellington's danger, ordered Bülow to attack, and employed the remarkable phrase, "We must ventilate the English army."

Shortly after, the brigades of Losthin, Hiller, Hacke and Ryssel deployed in front of Lobau's corps; the cavalry of Prince William of Prussia debouched from the Bois de Paris; Plancenoit was in flames; and the Prussian cannon-balls began to pour upon the ranks of even the guard held in reserve behind Napoleon.

CHAPTER XII

THE GUARD

EVERY one knows the rest,—the irruption of a third army; the battle broken up; eighty-six cannon thundering simultaneously; Pirch I. coming up with Bülow; Ziethen's cavalry led by Blücher in person; the French driven

back ; Marcognet swept from the plateau of Ohain, Durutte dislodged from Papelotte ; Donzelot and Quiot falling back ; Lobau attacked on the flank ; a fresh battle precipitating itself at nightfall on the weakened French regiments ; the whole English line resuming the offensive and pushed forward ; the gigantic gap made in the French army by the combined English and Prussian batteries ; extermination ; disaster in front ; disaster on the flank ; the Guard forming in line amid this fearful overthrow.

Conscious that they were about to die, they shouted, “ Long live the Emperor ! ” History has nothing more striking than this death-rattle breaking out into acclamations.

The sky had been overcast all day ; but at this very moment,—eight o’clock in the evening,—the clouds suddenly parted in the horizon, and the ominous red glow of the setting sun was visible through the elms on the Nivelles road. They had seen it rise at Austerlitz.

Each battalion of the Guard, for this issue, was commanded by a general. Friant, Michel, Roguet, Harlot, Mallet, and Poret de Morvan were there. When the tall bearskins of the grenadiers of the Guard with their large eagle badges appeared, symmetrical, in line, and calm amid the confusion of this conflict, the enemy felt a respect for France. They fancied they saw twenty Victories entering the battle-field with outstretched wings, and the men who had conquered, esteeming themselves vanquished, fell back ; but Wellington shouted, “ Up, Guards, and aim straight ! ” The red regiment of English Guards lying behind the hedges, rose. A storm of canister rent the tricolour flag waving above the French eagles. All rushed forward, and the final slaughter began. In the darkness, the Imperial Guard felt the army giving way around them, and the vast shock of the rout.

They heard the cry of “ Sauve qui peut ! ” substituted for the “ Long live the Emperor ! ” and with flight behind them they continued to advance, hundreds falling at every step they took. None hesitated or showed timidity. The private

was as heroic as the general, and not one attempted to escape that suicide.

Ney, desperate and grand with the consciousness of accepted death, offered himself to every blow in that storm. His fifth horse was killed under him. Bathed in perspiration, his eye aflame, foam on his lips, his uniform unbuttoned, one of his epaulets half cut through by the sabre-cut of a horse-guard, and his decoration with the great eagle dinted by a bullet, bleeding, muddy, magnificent, a broken sword in his hand, he shouted, "Come and see how a marshal of France dies on the battle-field!" But in vain; he did not die. He was haggard and indignant, and hurled at Drouet d'Erlon the question, "Are you not going to get yourself killed!" He yelled amid the roar of all this artillery engaged in crushing a handful of men, "Oh, there is nothing for me! I should like all these English bullets to enter my bowels!" You were reserved for French bullets, unfortunate man!

CHAPTER XIII

THE CATASTROPHE

THE rout in the rear of the Guard was melancholy.

The army suddenly gave way on all sides simultaneously,—at Hougmont, La Haye Sainte, Papelotte, and Plancenoit. The cry of "Treachery!" was followed by that of "Save yourselves!" An army disbanding is like a thaw,—all gives way, cracks, floats, rolls, falls, comes into collision, and dashes forward. Unprecedented disintegration! Ney borrows a horse, leaps upon it, and without hat, stock, or sword, dashes across the Brussels road, stopping at once English and French. He tries to hold back the army. He recalls it; he insults it; he clings wildly to the rout. He

is overwhelmed. The soldiers fly from him, shouting "Long live Marshal Ney!" Two of Durutte's regiments move backward and forward in terror, tossed, as it were, between the sabres of the hussars and the musketry fire of Kempt's, Best's, and Pack's brigades. A rout is the worst of all conflicts; friends kill each other in order to escape, squadrons and battalions dash against and destroy each other,—the vast foam of battle. Lobau at one extremity and Reille at the other are swept away by the torrent. In vain does Napoleon build a wall of what is left of his Guard. In vain does he expend the squadrons of his body-guard in a final effort. Quiot retreats before Vivian, Kellermann before Vandeleur, Lobau before Bülow, Moraud before Pirch, and Domon and Subervic before Prince William of Prussia. Guyot, who led the Emperor's squadrons to the charge, falls beneath the horses of English dragoons. Napoleon gallops along the line of fugitives, harangues, urges, threatens, and implores; all the mouths that shouted "Long live the Emperor" in the morning, remained wide open; they hardly knew him. The Prussian cavalry, which had come up fresh, dashes forward, cuts down, kills, and exterminates. Horses plunge; guns take flight; the soldiers of the artillery train unharness the horses from the caissons and escape on them; wagons overthrown, and with their four wheels in the air, block the road and supply opportunities for massacre. Men crush each other and trample over dead and living alike; arms are lost; a multitude, wild with terror, fills the roads, the paths, the bridges, the plains, the hills, the valleys, and the woods, which are thronged by this flight of forty thousand men. Cries of despair; knapsacks and muskets cast into the wheat; passages forced at the point of the sword; no comrades, no officers, no generals more,—indescribable terror. Ziethen puts France to the sword at his ease; the lions become kids. Such was this flight.

At Genappe an effort was made to turn, to make a stand, and to rally. Lobau collected three hundred men; the entrance to the village was barricaded, but at the first round

of Prussian canister all took to flight again, and Lobau was made prisoner. That volley of shot may still be seen, buried in the gable of an old brick house on the right of the road, just before you reach Genappe. The Prussians dashed into Genappe, doubtless made furious by such small victory. The pursuit was monstrous, for Blücher commanded extermination. Roguet had set the mournful example of threatening with death any French Grenadier who brought in a Prussian prisoner; and Blücher surpassed Roguet. Duchesme, general of the young guard, who was pursued into the door-way of an inn at Genappe, surrendered his sword to a Hussar of death, who took the sword and killed the prisoner. The victory was completed by the assassination of the vanquished. Let us punish, as we are writing history,—old Blücher dis-
honoured himself. This ferocity set the seal on disaster. The desperate rout passed through Genappe, passed through Quatre Bras, passed through Sombreffe, passed through Frasnes, passed through Thuin, passed through Charleroi, and only stopped at the frontier. Alas! and who was it flying in this way? The grand army.

Did this vertigo, this terror, this overthrow of the greatest bravery that ever astonished history, take place without a cause? No. The shadow of a mighty right hand is cast over Waterloo. It is the day of destiny; and the force which is greater than man produced that day. Hence the terror, hence all those great souls laying down their swords. Those who had conquered Europe fell crushed, having nothing more to say or do, and feeling the shadow of a terrible presence. *Hoc erat in fatis.* On that day the perspective of the human race was changed. Waterloo is the hinge of the nineteenth century. The disappearance of the great man was necessary for the advent of the great age. He Who is unanswerable, undertook the task. The panic of heroes admits of explanation. In the battle of Waterloo there is more than a storm-cloud,—there is a meteor. God passed by.

At nightfall, in a field near Genappe, Bernard and Bertrand seized by the skirt of his coat and detained a haggard,

thoughtful, gloomy man, who, carried thus far by the current of the rout, had just dismounted, passed the bridle over his arm, and was now, with wandering eye, returning alone to Waterloo. It was Napoleon, still striving to advance,—mighty somnambulist of a vanished dream.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST SQUARE

A FEW squares of the Guard, standing motionless amid the flow of the rout, like rocks in running water, held out till night. Night came, death also; they awaited the double shadow, and let it surround them. Each regiment, isolated from the others, and no longer connected with the army, which was broken on all sides, died where it stood. In order to perform this last exploit, they had taken up position, some on the heights of Rossomme, others on the plain of Mont St. Jean. The gloomy squares, deserted, conquered, and terrible, struggled tremendously with death; for Ulm, Wagram, Jena, and Friedland died with them.

When twilight set in, at nine in the evening, one square still remained at the foot of the plateau of Mont St. Jean. In this fatal valley, at the foot of the slope scaled by the cuirassiers, now inundated by the English masses, beneath the converging fire of the hostile and victorious artillery, under a fearful hailstorm of projectiles, this square still resisted. It was commanded by an obscure officer named Cambronne. At each volley the square diminished, but continued to reply to the canister with musketry fire, constantly contracting its four walls. Fugitives in the distance, pausing for a moment breathless, listened in the darkness to that gloomy, diminishing thunder.

When this legion had become a mere handful, when their

colours were but a rag, when their ammunition was exhausted and muskets were clubbed, when the pile of corpses was greater than the living group, the victors felt a sort of sacred awe, and the English artillery, taking breath, was silent. It was a sort of respite. Those combatants had around them an army of spectres, outlines of mounted men, the black profile of guns, and the white sky visible through the wheels; the colossal death's-head, which heroes ever glimpse in the smoke of battle, advanced and looked at them. They could hear in the twilight gloom the guns being loaded; the lighted matches, like the eyes of a tiger in the night, formed a circle round their heads. The linstocks of the English batteries approached the guns, and at that moment an English general,—Colville according to some, Maitland according to others,—holding the supreme moment suspended over the heads of those men, shouted to them, with emotion, “Brave Frenchmen, surrender!”

Cambronne answered: “Merde!”

CHAPTER XV

CAMBRONNÉ

OUT of respect for the reader, the most sublime word ever uttered by any Frenchman cannot be repeated. “Post no sublimity on history.”

At our own risk and peril we defy this notice.

Among these giants, then, there was a Titan,—Cambronne.

To utter this word and then die, what could be more sublime! To be willing to die is to die; and it is not his fault, if, mowed down by grape-shot, he survived.

The man who won the battle of Waterloo was not Napoleon with his routed army; it was not Wellington, giving way at four o'clock, and desperate at five; it was not Blücher,

for he had not fought. The man who won the battle of Waterloo was Cambronne.

To smite with the lightning of such a word the thunderbolt which kills you, is to be victorious. To make such a reply to disaster, to say this to destiny, to lay such a base for the lion which was to mark that spot, to hurl this answer to the rain of the night, to the treacherous wall of Hougoumont, to the hollow road of Ohain, to the delay of Grouchy, to the arrival of Blücher, to be irony in the tomb, to stand erect, as it were, after having fallen, to submerge in two syllables the European coalition, to present to kings the *latrinae* already known to the Cæsars, to make the last words the first, by imparting to it the brilliancy of France, to insultingly close Waterloo by Shrove Tuesday repartee, to supplement Leonidas by Rabelais, to sum up this victory in one supreme word, impossible to repeat, to lose ground and preserve history, after such a carnage to have the laugh on his side,—this was immense.

It was to defy the lightning with Æschylean grandeur.

The utterance of Cambronne has the effect of an explosion. It is the breaking of a heart with disdain; it is the excess of agony which breaks forth. Who conquered? Wellington? No. Without Blücher he had been lost. Was it Blücher? No. If Wellington had not begun, Blücher could not have ended. This Cambronne, this new-comer upon the scene, this unknown soldier, this infinitesimal atom of the war, felt that there was a lie beneath the catastrophe, which doubled its bitterness; and at the instant when he was bursting with rage they offered him that mockery,—life! How could he refrain from breaking out. There they are,—all the kings of Europe, the lucky generals, the thundering Joves. They have one hundred thousand victorious soldiers; behind them, a hundred thousand, a million. Their cannon, with matches lighted, are gaping; they have trampled beneath their heel the Imperial Guard and the Grand Army; they have crushed Napoleon; Cambronne alone remains,—only this earth-worm is left to protest, and he will protest. He looked for a word

as he would for a sword. Foam is on his lips, and this foam is the word. In presence of this victory, prodigious, yet commonplace, of this victory without victors, the desperate man stands erect once more; he submits to its magnitude, but he demonstrates its nothingness. He does more than spit on it; and yielding to numbers, force, and matter, he finds for his soul one sole term,— *excrement*. We repeat it, to say this, to do this, to invent this, is to win the victory.

At this fatal moment the spirit of the great past entered into this unknown man. Cambronne found the word of Waterloo as Rouget de l'Isle found the “Marseillaise,”— by an inspiration from on high. A breath from the divine whirlwind passed over these men, and they shuddered; one sang the supreme song, the other uttered the fearful cry. This word, full of Titanic scorn, was hurled by Cambronne, not only at Europe in the name of the empire,— that would be little,— but at the past in the name of the Revolution. We hear and see in Cambronne the old soul of the giants. It seems as if Danton were speaking or Kleber roaring.

To Cambronne's exclamation an English voice replied, “Fire!” The batteries flashed, the hillside trembled; from all those throats of brass came a last eruption of grape. A vast cloud of smoke, dimly silvered by the rising moon, rolled up; and when the smoke cleared away there was nothing left. The dreaded remnant was annihilated; the Guard was dead. The four walls of the living redoubt lay low, with here and there a scarcely perceptible quiver among the corpses. Thus the French legions, grander than those of Rome, expired at Mont St. Jean, on the earth sodden with rain and blood, in the gloomy corn-fields at the spot where now at four o'clock in the morning, Joseph, the driver of the mail-coach from Nivelles, passes, whistling, and gayly whipping up his horse.

CHAPTER XVI

QUOT LIBRAS IN DUCE?

THE battle of Waterloo is an enigma as puzzling to those who won it as to him who lost it. To Napoleon it was a panic;¹ Blücher saw nothing in it but fire; Wellington did not understand it at all. Look at the reports,—the bulletins are confused; the commentaries are involved; the one stammer, the other stutter. Jomini divides the battle of Waterloo into four moments; Muffling cuts it into three acts; Charras, although we do not entirely agree with all his opinions, is the only one who caught with his haughty and comprehensive glance the characteristic lineaments of that catastrophe of human genius contending with divine chance. All other historians suffer from a certain bewilderment in which they grope helplessly about. It was a day of lightning flashes; in truth, the overthrow of the military monarchy, which, to the great stupor of kings, dragged down all kingdoms in its fall,—the downfall of strength and the defeat of war.

In this event, which bears the stamp of superhuman necessity, men played but a small part.

If we take Waterloo from Wellington and Blücher, does that deprive England and Germany of anything? No. Neither illustrious England nor august Germany share in the problem of Waterloo; for, thank Heaven! nations are great without the mournful achievements of the sword. Neither Germany nor England nor France is contained in a scabbard; at this day, when Waterloo is only a clash of swords, Germany has a Goethe as well as a Blücher, and England a Byron as well as a Wellington. A mighty dawn of

¹ A battle ended, a day completed, false measures repaired, greater successes assured for the morrow,—all was lost by a moment of panic-terror.—*Napoleon at St. Helena*,

ideas is peculiar to our age; and in this dawn England and Germany have their own magnificent auroral light. They are majestic because they think. The high level which they bring to civilization is intrinsic with them; it comes from themselves, and not from an accident. Any aggrandizement which they may possess in the nineteenth century cannot boast of Waterloo as its fountain-head; for only barbarous nations grow suddenly after a victory,—it is the transient vanity of torrents swollen by a storm. Civilized nations, especially at the present day, are neither elevated nor debased by the good or evil fortune of a captain; and their specific weight in humanity results from something more than a battle. Their honour, thank God! their dignity, enlightenment, and genius are not numbers which those gamblers — heroes and conquerors — can stake in the lottery of battles. Very often a battle lost is progress gained; and less of glory may mean more of liberty. The drum is silent and reason speaks; it is a game which he who loses wins. Let us, therefore, review Waterloo coldly and impartially, and render to chance the things that belong to chance, and to God what belongs to God. What is Waterloo,—a victory? No; a prize in the lottery,—a prize won by Europe and paid by France.

It was hardly worth while to place the statue of a lion there.

Waterloo, by the way, is the strangest encounter recorded in history; Napoleon and Wellington are not enemies, but contraries. Never did God, who delights in antitheses, produce a more striking contrast or a more extraordinary comparison.

On one side, precision, foresight, geometry, prudence, an assured retreat, reserves prepared, an obstinate coolness, an imperturbable method, strategy taking every advantage of the ground, tactics to counterbalance battalions, carnage measured by a plumb-line, war regulated watch in hand, nothing voluntarily left to chance, the antique classic courage and absolute correctness. On the other side, we have intuition, divination, military strangeness, superhuman in-

stinct, a flashing glance; something that gazes like the eagle and strikes like lightning, prodigious art with tremendous impetuosity, all the mysteries of a profound soul, association with destiny; the river, the plain, the forest, and the hill summoned, and to some extent compelled to obey, the despot even going so far as to tyrannize over the battle-field; faith in a star blended with strategic science, heightening but disturbing it. Wellington was the Barême of war, Napoleon was its Michael Angelo; and on this occasion genius was conquered by calculation.

On both sides some one was expected; and it was the exact calculator who succeeded. Napoleon waited for Grouchy, who did not come; Wellington waited for Blücher, and he came.

Wellington is classic war taking its revenge. Bonaparte, in his dawn, had met it in Italy and superbly defeated it; the old owl fled before the young vulture. The antique tactics were not only overthrown, but put to shame. Who was this Corsican of six-and-twenty years of age? What meant this splendid ignoramus who, having everything against him, nothing in his favour, without provisions, ammunition, guns, shoes, almost without an army, with a handful of men against masses, dashed at allied Europe, and absurdly gained impossible victories? Whence came this raging madman who, almost without taking breath, and with the same set of warriors in his hand, reduced the five armies of the German emperor to powder, one after the other,—tumbling Beaulieu upon Alvinzi, Wurmser upon Beaulieu, Mélas upon Wurmser, and Mack upon Mélas? Who was this novice in war who possessed the effrontery of a planet? The academic military school excommunicated him, as they fled; hence arose the implacable rancour of the old Cæsarism against the new, of the old sabre against the flashing sword, and of the exchequer against genius. On June 18, 1815, this rancour had the last word; and beneath Lodi, Montebello, Montenotte, Mantua, Marengo, and Arcola, it wrote,—Waterloo. It was a triumph of mediocrity, sweet to the

majority ; and destiny consented to this irony. In his decline, Napoleon found a young Wurmser before him.

In fact, it was only necessary to blanch Wellington's hair, to have a Wurmser.

Waterloo is a battle of the first order, won by a captain of the second order.

What we should admire in the battle of Waterloo is England,—the English firmness, the English resolution, the English blood ; and the really superb thing about England, was (without offence), herself. It was not her captain, but her army.

Wellington, strangely ungrateful, declares in his despatch to Lord Bathurst, that his army,—the one which fought on June 18, 1815,—was a “detestable army.” What does the dreadful pile of bones buried in the trenches of Waterloo think of this?

England has been too modest to herself in her treatment of Wellington. To make Wellington so great is to belittle herself. Wellington is merely a hero like many another hero. The Scotch Grays, the Life Guards, Maitland and Mitchell's regiments, Pack and Kempt's infantry, Ponsonby and Somerset's cavalry, those Highlanders playing the bagpipes under the shower of grape-shot, Ryland's battalions, those raw recruits who could hardly handle a musket, and yet held their ground against the veterans of Essling and Rivoli,—all this is grand. Wellington was tenacious ; that was his merit, and we do not deny it to him. But the lowest of his privates and troopers was quite as steadfast as he ; and the iron soldier is as good as the iron duke. For our part, all our glorification is offered to the English soldier, the English army, the English nation ; and if there must be a trophy, it is to England that this trophy is due. The Waterloo column would be more just, if, instead of the figure of a man, it raised to the clouds the statue of a people.

But this great England will be angered by what we write ; for she still cherishes the feudal illusion, after her 1688 and the French 1789. She believes in heredity and hierarchy ;

and while no other people excel her in power and glory, she regards herself as a nation and not as a people. As a people, she readily subordinates herself, and takes a lord for her head; the workman submits to be despised; the soldier puts up with flogging.

It will be remembered that at the battle of Inkermann a sergeant, who, it appears, had saved the British army, could not be mentioned by Lord Raglan because the military hierarchy does not allow any hero below the rank of an officer to be mentioned in a despatch.

What we admire above all, in an encounter like Waterloo, is the prodigious skill of chance. The night rain, the wall of Hougoumont, the hollow way of Ohain, Grouchy deaf to the cannon, Napoleon's guide deceiving him, Bülow's guide enlightening him,—all this cataclysm is marvellously managed.

Altogether, let us say it frankly, Waterloo was more of a massacre than a battle.

Waterloo, of all pitched battles, is the one which had the smallest front for such a number of combatants. Napoleon, three-quarters of a league; Wellington, half a league; seventy-two thousand combatants on either side. From this close pressure came the carnage.

The following calculation has been made, and the following proportion established: loss of men at Austerlitz, French, fourteen per cent; Russian, thirty per cent; Austrian, forty-four per cent; at Wagram, French, thirteen per cent; Austrian, fourteen per cent; at the Moskowa, French, thirty-seven per cent; Russian, forty-four per cent; at Bautzen, French, thirteen per cent; Russian and Prussian, fourteen per cent; at Waterloo, French, fifty-six per cent; the Allies, thirty-one per cent,—total for Waterloo, forty-one per cent, or out of one hundred and forty-four thousand fighting men, sixty thousand killed.

The field of Waterloo to-day possesses that calm which belongs to the earth,—the impassive support of man; and it resembles all plains. But at night a sort of visionary mist

rises from it, and if any traveller walk about it, and listen and dream like Virgil on the fateful plain of Philippi, the hallucination of the catastrophe seizes upon him. The frightful 18th of June lives again ; the false monumental hillock is levelled ; the lion disappears ; the battle-field resumes its reality ; lines of infantry undulate over the plain ; the furious gallop of horses traverses the horizon ; the startled dreamer sees the flash of sabres, the gleam of bayonets, the red light of shells, the monstrous collision of thunderbolts ; he hears, like a death groan from the tomb, the vague clamour of the phantom battle. Those shadows are grenadiers ; those flashes are cuirassiers ; this skeleton is Napoleon ; this other skeleton is Wellington. All this is non-existent, and yet it still contains combats ; and the ravines are stained purple, and the trees rustle, and there is fury even in the clouds and in the darkness, while all the stern heights, Mont St. Jean, Hougmont, Frischemont, Papelotte, and Plancenoit, seem confusedly crowned by hosts of spectres exterminating one another.

CHAPTER XVII

SHOULD WATERLOO BE APPLAUSED?

THREE exists a highly respectable liberal school which does not detest Waterloo; but we do not belong to it. To us Waterloo is only the stupefied date of liberty; that such an eagle should issue from such an egg is assuredly unexpected.

Waterloo, if we place ourselves at the culminating point of the question, is intentionally a counter-revolutionary victory,— it is Europe against France; it is Petersburg, Berlin, and Vienna against Paris; it is the *statu quo* opposed to the initiative; it is July 14, 1789, attacked through March 20, 1815; it is all the monarchies clearing the decks to conquer

the indomitable French spirit of revolt. The dream was to extinguish that vast people which had been in a state of eruption for six-and-twenty years; and for this purpose, Brunswick, Nassau, the Romanoffs, Hohenzollern, and the Hapsburgs coalesced with the Bourbons. Waterloo carries divine right on its crupper. It is true that as the empire was despotic, royalty, by the natural reaction of things, was compelled to be liberal; and a constitutional order issued from Waterloo, much to the regret of the conquerors. The fact is, that Revolution can never really be conquered; and being providential and absolutely fatal, it constantly re-appears, — before Waterloo, in Napoleon overthrowing the old thrones; after Waterloo, in Louis XVIII. granting and enduring the charter. Bonaparte places a postilion on the throne of Naples and a sergeant on the throne of Sweden, employing inequality to demonstrate equality; Louis XVIII. at St. Ouen countersigns the declaration of the rights of man. If you wish to understand what revolution is, call it Progress; and if you wish to understand what progress is, call it To-morrow. To-morrow ever does its work irresistibly; it does it to-day; and it ever strangely attains its object. It employs Wellington to make an orator of Foy, who was only a soldier. Foy falls at Hougoumont and rises again in the tribune. Such is the process of progress, and that workman has no bad tools; it fits to its divine work the man who bestrode the Alps and the good old tottering invalid of Father Elysée. It employs both the gouty man and the conqueror, — the conqueror abroad, the gouty man at home. Waterloo, by cutting short the demolition of thrones by the sword, produced no other effect than to continue the revolutionary work in another quarter. The slashers have finished, and it is the turn of the thinkers; the age which Waterloo strove to arrest, marched over it, and went on its way. That sinister victory was vanquished by liberty.

In short, and incontestably, that which triumphed at Waterloo; which smiled behind Wellington; which procured him all the marshals' staff of Europe, including by the way,

that of Marshal of France; which rolled along joyously the wheelbarrows full of bones, to make a foundation for the lion; which triumphantly inscribed on that pedestal the date June 18, 1815; which encouraged Blücher as he put the routed army to the sword; and which from the heights of Mont St. Jean hovered over France as over its prey,—was counter-revolution. It was counter-revolution that muttered the infamous word, “dismemberment;” but on reaching Paris it had a close view of the crater. It felt that those ashes burned its feet, and it changed its mind. It went back to stammering a charter.

Let us see in Waterloo only what really exists in it. There is no intentional liberty; for counter-revolution was involuntarily liberal in the same way as Napoleon, by a corresponding phenomenon, was involuntarily a revolutionist. On June 18, 1815, Robespierre on horseback was thrown.

CHAPTER XVIII

RESTORATION OF DIVINE RIGHT

WITH the fall of the dictatorship, an entire European system crumbled away.

The empire vanished in darkness which resembled that of the expiring Roman world. It rose again from the abyss as in the time of the barbarians; but the barbarism of 1815, which must be called by its familiar name, counter-revolution, had but little breath, soon began to gasp, and stopped short. The empire, we confess, was mourned, and wept by heroic eyes. If glory lies in the sword turned into a sceptre, the empire was glory itself. It diffused over the earth all the light that tyranny can give,—a dim light; nay, more: an obscure light; for, when compared with true daylight, it is night.

This disappearance of night produced the effect of an eclipse.

Louis XVIII. re-entered Paris, and the dances of July 8 effaced the enthusiasm of March 20. The Corsican became the antithesis of the Bearnais, and the flag on the dome of the Tuileries was white. The exile was enthroned, and the deal table of Hartwell was placed before the fleur-de-lis strewn arm-chair of Louis XIV. People talked of Bouvines and Fontenoy as if they had occurred but yesterday, while Austerlitz was antiquated. The throne and the altar fraternized majestically; and one of the most undoubted forms of the welfare of society in the nineteenth century was established in France and on the Continent,—Europe adopted the white cockade. Trestaillon was celebrated, and the motto *nec pluribus impar* re-appeared in the stone rays representing a sun on the front of the barracks, on the Quai d'Orsay.

Where there had been an Imperial Guard, there was a “red household;” and the arch of the Carrousel, if loaded with badly endured victories, feeling ill at ease among these novelties, and perhaps slightly ashamed of Marengo and Arcola, got out of the difficulty by accepting the statue of the Duke d'Angoulême. The cemetery of the Madeleine,—a terrible Potter's Field in '93,—was covered with marble and jasper, because the bones of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were mingled with its dust. In the moat of Vincennes a sepulchral shaft rose from the ground, as a reminder that the Duke d'Enghien died there in the very month that Napoleon was crowned. Pope Pius VII., who performed the coronation ceremony very close upon that death, tranquilly gave his blessing to the downfall, as he had bestowed it on the elevation. There was at Schönbrunn a shadow four years of age, whom it was seditious to call the King of Rome. And these things took place, and kings regained their thrones, and the master of Europe was put in a cage, and the old order became the new order, and the light and the shadow of the earth changed places, because

on the afternoon of a summer day a peasant boy said to a Prussian in a wood, "Go this way and not that!"

That 1815 was a sort of melancholy April; old, unhealthy, and venomous realities assumed a new aspect. Falsehood espoused 1789; divine right put on the mask of a charter; fictions became constitutional; prejudices, superstitions, and mental reservations, having Article 14 in their heart, were varnished over with liberalism. The snakes cast their slough.

Man had been at once aggrandized and lessened by Napoleon; idealism, in this reign of splendid materialism, received the strange name of ideology. It was a grave imprudence in a great man to ridicule the future; but the people, that food for powder, so fond of the gunner, sought after him. "Where is he? What is he doing?" "Napoleon is dead," said a passer-by to a veteran of Marengo and Waterloo. "He dead!" the soldier exclaimed; "much you know about him!" Imagination deified this man even when overthrown. Europe after Waterloo was dark, for an enormous void was long left unfilled after the disappearance of Napoleon.

The kings placed themselves in this void, and old Europe took advantage of it to effect a reformation. There was a holy alliance,—Belle Alliance [Beautiful Alliance], the fatal field of Waterloo had said beforehand.

In the presence of the old Europe reconstructed, the lineaments of a new France were sketched in. The future derided by the Emperor made its entry, and wore on its brow the star,—Liberty. The ardent eyes of youthful generations were turned toward it; but, singular to say, they at the same time felt equally attached to the future, Liberty, and to the past, Napoleon. Defeat had made the conquered man greater; Bonaparte fallen seemed greater than Napoleon standing on his feet. Those who had triumphed were alarmed. England had him guarded by Hudson Lowe, and France had him watched by Montchenu. His folded arms became the terror of thrones, and Alexander christened him "my insomnia." This terror resulted from the immense

amount of revolution existent in him; and it is this which explains and excuses Bonapartist liberalism. This phantom caused the old world to tremble; and kings sat uneasily on their thrones, with the rock of St. Helena on the horizon.

While Napoleon was dying at Longwood, the sixty thousand men who fell at Waterloo rotted peacefully; and something of their peace was diffused throughout the world. The Congress of Vienna converted it into the treaties of 1815; and Europe called this the Restoration.

Such is Waterloo.

But what does the Infinite care? All this tempest, all this cloud, this war, and then this peace,—all this shadow did not for a moment disturb the flash of that mighty eye before which a grub, leaping from one blade of grass to another equals the eagle flying from belfry to belfry on the towers of Notre-Dame.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BATTLE-FIELD BY NIGHT

WE must return, for it is necessary to our story, to the fatal battle-field of June 18, 1815.

The moon was full, and its light favoured Blücher's ferocious pursuit, revealed the trail of the fugitives, delivered up that ill-starred crowd to the Prussian cavalry, and assisted the massacre. Such tragical complacency of the night is witnessed at times in catastrophes.

After the last cannon was fired, the plain of Mont St. Jean was left deserted.

The English occupied the French encampment, for the usual confirmation of victory is to sleep in the bed of the conquered. They established their bivouac a little beyond Rossomme; and while the Prussians, let loose on the retreat-

ing rout, pushed forward, Wellington proceeded to the village of Waterloo to draw up his report for Lord Bathurst.

Were ever the *sic vos non vobis* applicable, it is most certainly to this village of Waterloo, which did nothing, and was half a league away from the action. Mont St. Jean was cannonaded, Hougoumont burned, Papelotte burned, Plancenoit burned, La Haye Sainte carried by storm, and La Belle Alliance witnessed the embrace of the two victors; but these names are scarce known, and Waterloo, which had no share in the battle, has all the honour.

We are not of those who flatter war; and when the opportunity offers, we tell the truth about it. War has frightful beauties which we have not concealed; but it has also, we must allow, some ugly features. One of the most surprising is the rapid stripping of the dead after victory; the dawn that follows a battle always rises on naked corpses.

Who does this? Who sullies the triumph in this way? Whose is the hideous, furtive hand which slips into the pocket of victory? Who are the "artful dodgers" that ply their trade in the rear of glory? Some philosophers, Voltaire among them, assert that they are the very men who made the glory; they say that those who keep their feet, plunder those lying on the ground, and that the hero of the day is the vampire of the night. After all, a man has surely the right to strip a corpse of which he is the author. We do not believe it, however; it does not seem to us possible that the same hand can reap a crop of laurels and steal the shoes of a dead man.

One thing is certain, that, as a usual rule, robbers follow after conquerors; but we must leave the soldier, especially him of to-day, out of the question.

Every army has a tail; and it is that which must be blamed. Bat-like beings, half servants, half brigands and lackeys, all the species of the vespertilio which the twilight called war engenders, wearers of uniforms who do not fight, malignerers, dreadful cripples, interloping sutlers, trotting along with their wives in small carts, and stealing

things which they sell again, beggars offering themselves as guides to officers, soldiers, servants, marauders,—all these, armies on the march in former times (we do not allude to the present day) dragged after them; and they were known as “stragglers.” No army and no nation were responsible for these beings,—they spoke Italian and followed the Germans; they spoke French and followed the English. It was by one of these scoundrels,—a Spanish camp-follower who spoke French,—that the Marquis de Fervacques, deceived by his Picardy accent, and taking him for a Frenchman, was killed and robbed on the battle-field during the night that followed the victory of Cerisolles. The detestable maxim, “Live on the enemy,” produced this leprosy, which strict discipline alone could cure. There are some reputations which deceive; and we do not always know why certain generals, in other respects great, became so popular. Turenne was adored by his troops because he tolerated plunder. Evil permitted is kindness; and Turenne was so kind that he allowed the Palatinate to be destroyed by fire and sword. A larger or smaller amount of marauders followed an army, according as the chief was more or less severe. Hoche and Marceau had no camp-followers; and Wellington, we willingly do him the justice of stating, had but few.

Still, on the night of June 18, the dead were stripped. Wellington was strict; he ordered that any one caught in the act should be shot. But rapine is tenacious; marauders plundered in one corner of the field while they were being shot in the other.

The moon cast sinister gleams over the plain.

About midnight a man was prowling, or rather crawling, about the hollow road of Ohain; he was, according to all appearance, one of those whom we have just described,—neither English nor French, neither peasant nor soldier, less a man than a ghoul, attracted by the smell of the dead bodies, whose victory was robbery, and who had come to plunder Waterloo. He was dressed in a blouse, which looked some-

thing like a cloak, was both timid and bold, and looked behind him as he went onward. Who was this man? Night probably knew more about him than did day. He had no bag, but evidently had capacious pockets under his blouse. From time to time he stopped, examined the plain around him as if to see whether he was watched, bent down quickly, disturbed something lying silent and motionless on the ground, then drew himself up and again slipped away. His attitude and his rapid, mysterious movements made him resemble those twilight *larvæ* which haunt ruins, and which the old Norman legends call *les alleurs*.

Certain nocturnal wading-birds display the same outline on the marshes.

If any eye had carefully pierced the mist it might have seen, some distance away, behind the house which stands at the intersection of the Nivelles and Mont St. Jean roads, a sort of small sutler's cart, with a tilt of tarpaulin stretched over wicker-work, drawn by a hungry-looking jade, which was cropping the nettles through its bit. In this cart a woman was seated on chests and bundles. Perhaps there was some connection between this cart and the prowler.

There was not a cloud in the sky, there was no wind; and though the ground might be blood-red, the moon was white. Such is the indifference of nature. In the fields, branches of trees broken by cannon-ball, but still upheld by the bark, waved softly in the night breeze. A breath shook the brambles; and there was a quiver in the grass that resembled the departure of souls.

In the distance the march of the English patrols and rounds was vaguely heard.

Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte continued to burn, making — one in the west, the other in the east — two large bodies of flame, which were connected by the English camp-fires, stretching along the hills on the horizon, in an immense semicircle, like an unfastened necklace of rubies, with a carbuncle at either end.

We have described the catastrophe of the Ohain road;

the heart shrinks from the thought of what that death must have been to so many brave men.

If there be anything frightful, if there exists a reality which surpasses dreaming, it is this,— to live, to see the sun; to be in full possession of manly vigour; to be healthy and gay; to laugh valiantly; to rush toward a glory glittering before you; to feel in your breast lungs that breathe, a heart that beats, and a will that reasons; to speak, to think, to hope, to love; to have a mother, a wife, and children; to enjoy the light, and then suddenly, in the space of a cry, to be hurled into an abyss; to fall, roll, crush, and be crushed; to see corn-stalks, flowers, leaves, and branches, and to be unable to lay hold of anything; to feel your sabre useless, men under you and horses over you; to struggle in vain, your bones fractured by some kick in the gloom; to feel a heel which makes your eyes start from their sockets; to bite the horses' shoes in your rage; to stifle, to yell, to writhe; to be underneath, and say to yourself, "A moment ago I was a living man!"

At this spot where this lamentable disaster occurred all was now silence. The hollow way was filled with an inextricable pile of horses and their riders. There was no slope now, for the corpses levelled the road with the plain, and came up flush to the top, like a well-filled measure of barey. A pile of dead atop, a stream of blood at bottom, — such was the road on the night of June 18, 1815. The blood ran as far as the Nivelles road, and there overflowed in a wide pool in front of the barricade, at a spot which is still pointed out.

It will be remembered that the destruction of the cuirassiers took place at the opposite point, near the Genappe road. The depth of the corpses was equal to that of the hollow way; toward the middle, at the spot where it became level, where Delord's division passed, the layer of dead was thinner.

The nocturnal prowler, at whom we have allowed the reader to glance, proceeded in that direction, searching this

immense tomb. He looked around and held a hideous review of the dead; he walked with his feet in the blood.

All at once he stopped.

A few paces before him in the hollow way, at the point where the pile of dead ended, an open hand, illumined by the moon, emerged from the heap of men and horses.

This hand had on one finger something that glittered. It was a gold ring.

The man bent down, and when he rose again there was no longer a ring on that finger.

He did not exactly rise; he remained in a frightened, bent attitude, turning his back to the pile of dead, studying the horizon, supporting himself on his two forefingers, which rested on the ground, his head spying over the edge of the hollow way. The four paws of the jackal are suited for certain actions.

Then, making up his mind, he rose.

At the same moment he started, for he felt that some one was holding him down.

He turned. It was the open hand which had closed and seized the skirt of his coat.

An honest man would have been frightened, but this one began to laugh.

“Hullo!” he said, “it is only the dead man. I prefer a ghost to a policeman.”

The hand, however, soon relaxed its hold; for effort is quickly exhausted in the tomb.

“Well now, can this dead man be alive?” continued the marauder. “Let me have a look.”

He bent down again, fumbled in the heap, removed all that hindered him, seized the hand, grasped the arm, freed the head, pulled out the body, and a few moments later dragged an inanimate, or at least a fainting, man into the shadow of the hollow way. He was an officer of cuirassiers of high rank, for a heavy gold epaulet peeped from under his cuirass. This officer had lost his helmet, and a furious sword-cut scarred his face, which was covered with blood. He did not

appear, however, to have broken any bones; and by some fortunate accident, if such a word be possible here, the dead had formed an arch over him so as to save him from being crushed. His eyes were closed.

He had on his cuirass the silver cross of the Legion of Honour.

The prowler tore away this cross, which disappeared in one of the gulfs under his blouse.

After this he felt the officer's fob, found a watch and took it; then he felt in his waiscoat, found a purse and pocketed it.

At this stage of the assistance he was rendering the dying man, the officer opened his eyes.

"Thanks," he said feebly.

The roughness of the man's movements, the freshness of the night, and the freely inhaled air, had aroused him from his lethargy.

The prowler did not answer, but raised his head. A sound of footsteps was heard on the plain; it was probably some patrol approaching.

The officer murmured, for there was still the agony of death in his voice:—

"Who won the battle?"

"The English," answered the marauder.

The officer continued:—

"Feel in my pockets; you will find a purse and a watch; take them."

Though this was already done, the prowler did as requested, and said:—

"There is nothing in them."

"I have been robbed," said the officer; "I am sorry. I would have given them to you."

The footsteps of the patrol became more and more distinct.

"Some one is coming," said the marauder, preparing to go away.

The officer, raising his arm with difficulty, stopped him.

“ You have saved my life. Who are you? ”

The prowler answered rapidly, and in a low voice: “ I belong, like yourself, to the French army; but I must leave you, for if I were caught I should be shot. I have saved your life; so now get out of the scrape as best you can.”

“ What is your rank? ”

“ Sergeant.”

“ Your name? ”

“ Thénardier.”

“ I shall not forget that name,” said the officer. “ And do you remember mine; it is Pontmercy.”

BOOK II

THE SHIP "ORION"

CHAPTER I

NO. 24,601 BECOMES NO. 9,430

JEAN VALJEAN was recaptured.

As our readers will probably thank us for passing rapidly over painful details, we will merely quote two paragraphs published by the newspapers of the day, a few months after the occurrence of the surprising events at M——.

These articles are rather summary, but it must be remembered that there was no "Police News" at that period.

The first is taken from the "Drapeau Blanc" and is dated July 25, 1823:—

"A certain district of the Pas de Calais has just been the scene of an uncommon event. A man, a stranger to the department, named Madeleine, some years since revived, by a new process, an old local trade,—the manufacture of jet ornaments and black beads. He made his own fortune, and, let us add, that of the district; and in acknowledgment of his services he was elected mayor. The police have now discovered that this Madeleine is no other than an ex-convict, who had broken his ban, having been sentenced in 1796 for robbery, under the name of Jean Valjean. He has been sent back to the galleys. It seems that prior to his arrest he succeeded in withdrawing from Lafitte's bank a sum of more than half a million which he had deposited there, and which, it is said, he had honestly acquired by his trade. Since his return to Toulon futile efforts have been made to discover where this amount is concealed."

The second article, which is rather more detailed, is copied from the "Journal de Paris" of the same date:

"An ex-convict named Jean Valjean has just been tried at the Var assizes under circumstances calculated to attract attention. This villain succeeded in evading the vigilance of the police, changed his name, and was finally made mayor of one of our small northern towns, where he established a considerable trade. He was at length unmasked and arrested through the indefatigable zeal of the public authorities. He had as his mistress a girl of the town, who died of a fit at the moment of his arrest. This scoundrel, who is endowed with Herculean strength, managed to escape; but three or four days later the police again captured him in Paris, as he was entering one of those small coaches which run from the capital to the village of Montfermeil (Seine et Oise). It is said that he took advantage of those three or four days of liberty to withdraw from one of our chief bankers an amount estimated at six or seven hundred thousand francs. According to the indictment, he buried it at some spot known only to himself, and it has not been found; but, however this may be, this Jean Valjean has just been tried at Var assizes for highway robbery and violence, committed some eight years ago upon one of those honest lads who, as the patriarch of Ferney says in immortal verse,—

'Come from Savoy every year
With dextrous hand to clear
Our chimneys tall when choked with soot.'

This bandit made no defence, but it was proved by the skilful and eloquent organ of public justice that Jean Valjean was a member of a band of robbers in the south. He was consequently found guilty and sentenced to death. The criminal refused to appeal to the supreme court; but the king, in his inexhaustible mercy, deigned to commute his sentence to penal servitude for life. Jean Valjean was immediately removed to the galleys at Toulon."

It will not be forgotten that Jean Valjean had displayed religious tendencies at M——; and some of the papers, among them the "Constitutionnel," regarded this commutation as a triumph of the priestly party.

Jean Valjean changed his number at Toulon, and was known as 9,430.

Let us state here, once and for all, that with M. Madeleine the prosperity of M—— disappeared. All he had foreseen during his night of hesitation and fever was realized; his absence was in truth the absence of the soul of the place.

After his fall there took place at M—— that selfish division of great fallen existences, that fatal dismemberment of flourishing things, which is daily accomplished, obscurely, in the human community, and which history has noted only once, because it occurred after the death of Alexander. Lieutenants crown themselves kings; overseers suddenly become manufacturers, and envious rivalries spring up. M. Madeleine's large workshops were closed; the buildings fell into a ruinous condition, and the artisans dispersed,—some leaving the town, others the trade. All was henceforth done on a small scale instead of a large one,—for lucre, instead of the public welfare. There was no centre, but on all sides violent competition. M. Madeleine had commanded and directed everything. When he fell, a spirit of contest succeeded that of organization; bitterness succeeded cordiality, and mutual hatred the good-will of the founder. The threads tied by M. Madeleine became knotted and broken; the process was adulterated, the product became poor, and confidence was destroyed. The market diminished, and there were fewer orders; wages fell, there were stoppages, and lastly came bankruptcy.

The State itself saw that some one had been crushed somewhere; for less than four years after the sentence of the court identifying Madeleine and Jean Valjean to the profit of the galleys, the cost of collecting the taxes was doubled in the district of M——. M. de Villèle made a remark to that effect in the House, in February, 1827.

CHAPTER II

TWO LINES OF DOUBTFUL ORIGIN

BEFORE going further we must relate at some length a strange fact which occurred at about the same period at Montfermeil, and which may possibly possess some coincidence with certain police conjectures.

There is at Montfermeil a very old superstition, which is the more curious and valuable because a popular superstition in the neighbourhood of Paris is like an alo-tree in Siberia. We are of those who respect everything which is of the nature of a rare plant. This, then, is the Montfermeil superstition: it is believed that from time immemorial the devil has selected the forest as the hiding-place for his treasure. Old women declare that it is not rare to meet at nightfall in remote parts of the forest a black man resembling a wagoner or wood-cutter, wearing wooden shoes, canvas trousers, and blouse, and recognizable by the fact that he has on his head two enormous horns in place of cap or hat. This man is usually engaged in digging a hole; and there are three modes of action in the event of meeting him. The first is to go up to the man and address him; in that case, you perceive that he is simply a peasant, that he looks black because it is twilight, that he is not digging a hole, but cutting grass for his kine, and that what you took for horns is nothing but a dungfork which he carries on his back, whose prongs seem to grow out of his head. You go home and die within the week. The second plan is to watch him, wait till he has dug his hole, filled it up, and gone away; then you run up to the hole and take out the treasure which the black man has necessarily deposited in it. In this case you die within the month. The last way is not to speak to the black man at all, not to look at him, but to run away at full speed; and then you die within the year.

All three modes have their inconveniences ; but the second, which offers at any rate some advantages, among others that of possessing a treasure, if only for a month, is the one most generally adopted. Bold men who are tempted by every chance have, so it is declared, frequently re-opened the hole dug by the black man, and tried to rob the devil. It seems, however, as if the profits were small ; at any rate, if we may believe tradition, and particularly and especially two enigmatical lines in dog latin which a wicked Norman monk, a bit of a sorcerer, named Tryphon, left on this subject. This Tryphon lies buried at St. George's abbey at Bocherville, near Rouen, and toads spawn on his tomb.

A man makes enormous exertions, then, for the hole is generally very deep ; he perspires, works the whole night through (for the operation must be performed by night), gets a wet shirt, burns out his candle, breaks his pick, and when he at last reaches the bottom of the hole and lays his hand on the treasure, what does he find ? What is the fiend's treasure ? — a sou, sometimes a crown-piece, a stone, a skeleton, a bleeding corpse, or a spectre folded up like a sheet of paper in a pocket-book, and sometimes nothing at all ! This appears to be revealed to the searchers by Tryphon's lines,—

“ Fodit et in fossâ thesauros condit opacâ,
As, mummos, lapides, cadaver, simulacra, nihilque.”

It seems that in our day there is also sometimes found a powder-flask with bullets, or an odd pack of greasy, dirty cards which have evidently been used by the devil. Tryphon does not record these two facts because he lived in the twelfth century ; and it does not appear that the devil had the sense to invent gunpowder before Roger Bacon, or playing-cards before Charles VI.

Moreover, if you play with those cards you are sure to lose all you possess, while the gunpowder has the peculiarity of making your gun burst in your face.

A very short time after it occurred to the police that Jean

Valjean might have been prowling round Montfermeil during his four days of liberty, it was noticed in that village that a certain old road-mender of the name of Boulatruelle was "up to his tricks" in the forest. It was generally believed that this Boulatruelle had been in the galleys. He was to some extent under police inspection; and as he could not find work anywhere, the administration employed him at low wages as mender of the cross-road from Gagny to Lagny.

This Boulatruelle was a man at whom the villagers looked askance, as too respectful, too humble, too ready to doff his cap to everybody, trembling and fawning before the police,—probably allied with robbers, it was said,—and suspected of lurking about the roads after dark. The only thing in his favour was that he was a drunkard.

This is what the people fancied that they noticed:—

For some time past Boulatruelle had left work at an early hour, and gone into the forest with his pick-axe. He was met toward evening in the most desolate clearings, in the wildest thickets, apparently seeking something, and at times digging holes. The old women who passed took him at first for Beelzebub; and when they recognized Boulatruelle, they did not feel at all more easy in mind. Such meetings seemed greatly to annoy Boulatruelle. It was plain that he tried to hide, and that there was a mystery in what he was doing.

It was said in the village, "It is clear that the devil has made his appearance. Boulatruelle saw him, and is seeking; well, he is cunning enough to pocket Lucifer's hoard." The Voltairians added, "Will Boulatruelle cheat the devil or the devil cheat Boulatruelle?" while the old women crossed themselves repeatedly.

Boulatruelle, however, discontinued his forest rambles, and resumed his regular work, whereupon something else became the subject of gossip.

Some persons, however, were still curious, thinking that there was probably in the affair, not the fabulous treasure of the legend, but something more palpable and tangible than

the fiend's bank-notes, and that the road-mender had doubtless found out half the secret. The most "puzzled" were the school-master and Thénardier the publican, who was everybody's friend, and had not disdained an intimacy with Boulatruelle.

"He has been in the galleys," Thénardier would say. "Well, good gracious! we do not know who has been there, or who may go there."

One evening the school-master declared that in other times the authorities would have inquired what Boulatruelle was about in the wood, and that he would have been obliged to speak. They would have employed torture if necessary; and Boulatruelle would not have resisted the ordeal of water, for instance. "Let us give him the ordeal of wine," said Thénardier.

They set to work, and Boulatruelle drank enormously, but held his tongue. He combined, with admirable art and in magisterial proportions, the thirst of a sponge and the discretion of a judge. Still, by returning to the charge, and by putting together the few obscure words which he did allow to escape him, this is what Thénardier and the school-master fancied that they made out:—

Boulatruelle, on going to work one morning at daybreak, was surprised to see under a bush a spade and a pick, which looked as if they were hidden;" still he supposed that they belonged to Father Sixfours, the water-carrier, and thought no more of the matter. On the evening of the same day, however, he saw, without being himself seen, as he was hidden behind a tree, "a certain fellow who did not belong to those parts, and whom he, Boulatruelle, knew," proceeding toward the most retired part of the wood. This Thénardier translated as "a comrade at the galleys;" but Boulatruelle obstinately refused to mention his name. This person was carrying a bundle,—something square, like a box or small chest. Boulatruelle was surprised, but it was not till some ten minutes later that the idea of following the "person" occurred to him. But it was too late; the person was

already among the trees, night had fallen, and Boulatruelle was unable to catch up with him. Then he resolved to watch at the edge of the wood. The moon was shining. Some two or three hours after, Boulatruelle saw this person come out of the wood, not carrying the box, however, but a spade and pick. Boulatruelle allowed him to pass, and did not address him; for he said to himself that the other man was thrice as strong as he, and, being armed with a pick, would probably smash him on recognizing him and finding himself recognized,— a touching effusion on the part of two old comrades who meet suddenly. But the spade and pick were a ray of light to Boulatruelle; he hurried to the thicket at daybreak, and no longer found them there. From this he concluded that his acquaintance, on entering the wood, had dug a hole with his pick, buried his box, and then covered it with the spade. Now, as the box was too small to contain a corpse, it must contain money, hence his researches. Boulatruelle explored the forest in all directions, and especially wherever the ground seemed to have been recently turned up; but it was all of no use.

He “ferreted out” nothing. Nobody in Montfermeil thought any more of the matter, except some worthy gossips, who said, “ You may be sure that the road-mender did not take all that trouble for nothing; it is certain that the foul fiend has been here.”

CHAPTER III

THE FETTERS MUST HAVE UNDERGONE SOME PREVIOUS MANIPULATION TO BE THUS BROKEN BY THE STROKE OF A HAMMER.

TOWARD the close of October, in that same year, 1823, the inhabitants of Toulon saw a vessel enter their port for the purpose of repairing some damage done by a heavy storm. It was the “Orion,” which at a later date was em-

ployed at Brest as a training-school, but now formed part of the Mediterranean squadron.

This vessel, battered as it was, for the sea had treated it roughly, produced a fine effect as it entered the roads. It flew a flag which received the regulation salute of eleven guns, to which it replied round for round,—a total of two-and-twenty rounds. It has been calculated that in salvos, royal and military politeness, exchanges of courtesy signals, formalities of roadsteads and citadels, sunrise and sunset saluted every day by all fortresses and vessels of war, opening and closing ports, etc., the civilized world fires every twenty-four hours, and in all parts of the globe, one hundred and fifty thousand useless rounds. At six francs the round, this make nine hundred thousand francs a day. Three hundred millions a year expended in smoke. Meantime, poor people are dying of starvation.

The year 1823 was what the Restoration called “the epoch of the Spanish war.”

This war contained many events in one, and many peculiarities. It was a grand family affair for the House of Bourbon, the French branch succouring and protecting the Madrid branch; that is to say, proving its majority,—an apparent return to national traditions, complicated by servitude and subjection to the northern cabinets. The Duke d'Angoulême, surnamed by the liberal papers the “hero of Andujar,” repressing in a triumphal attitude, which was somewhat spoiled by his peaceful looks, the old and very real terrorism of the Holy Office, which was at odds with the chimerical terrorism of the liberals; the *sans-culottes*, resuscitated to the great alarm of dowagers, under the name of *Descamisados*; monarchy offering an obstacle to the progress which it termed anarchy; the theories of '89 suddenly nipped in the bud; a European check suddenly given to the French idea which was making its voyage round the world; beside the generalissimo son of France, the Prince de Carignan, afterward Charles Albert, enrolling himself as a volunteer, with the red worsted epaulets of a grenadier, in this cru-

sade of kings against people ; the soldiers of the empire taking the field again after eight years' rest, aged, sad, and wearing the white cockade ; the tricolour waved in a foreign country by an heroic handful of Frenchmen, as the white flag was at Coblenz thirty years before ; monks mingled with French troopers ; the spirit of liberty and novelty set right by bayonets ; principles checkmated by artillery ; France undoing by her arms what she had done by her mind ; the enemy's leaders sold ; soldiers hesitating ; towns besieged by millions ; no military peril, and yet possible explosions, as in every mine which is surprised and invaded ; but little blood shed, little honour won ; disgrace for a few, and glory for none ; — such was this war, brought about by princes who descended from Louis XIV., and conducted by generals who issued from Napoleon. It had the sad fate to recall neither the great war nor the great policy.

Some engagements were serious ; the passage of the Trocadero, for instance, was a brilliant military achievement ; but, on the whole, we repeat, the trumpets of that war give back a cracked sound, the whole affair was suspicious, and history agrees with France as to the difficulty of accepting this false triumph. It seems evident that certain Spanish officers, ordered to resist, yielded too easily ; and the idea of corruption was evolved from the victory. Generals rather than battles were won, and the victorious soldier returned home humiliated. It was, in truth, a degrading war ; and the words “Bank of France” could be read in the folds of the flag.

The soldiers of the war of 1808, on whom Saragossa fell in dreadful ruins, frowned in 1823 at the easy opening of citadel gates, and began to regret Palafax. It is the humour of France to prefer a Rostopchin before her rather than a Ballesteros.

From a more serious point of view, on which it is right to dwell here, this war, which wounded the military spirit of France, angered the democratic spirit. It was undertaken in behalf of serfdom ; in this campaign the object of the

French soldier, the son of democracy, was to bend others to the yoke. This was a hideous mistake; for the mission of France is to arouse the soul of nations, and not to stifle it. All the revolutions of Europe, since 1792, are the French Revolution, and liberty radiates from France. This is a solar fact. He must be blind who does not recognize this, so Bonaparte said.

The war of 1823, an outrage upon the generous Spanish nation, was therefore at the same time an attack upon the French Revolution. It was France who committed this monstrous act of violence, by force; for, with the exception of wars of liberation, all that armies do, they do by force, as the words "passive obedience" indicate. An army is a strange masterpiece of combination, in which force results from an enormous amount of impotence. In this way we can explain war carried on by humanity against humanity, in spite of humanity.

The war of 1823 was fatal to the Bourbons; they regarded it as a triumph, for they did not see the danger that lies in killing an idea to order. In their simplicity they committed the mistake of introducing into their establishment the immense weakness of a crime as an element of strength. The spirit of ambuscade entered into their policy; and 1830 germinated in 1823. The Spanish campaign became in their councils an argument for oppression, and for adventures by right divine. France having re-established *el rey neto* in Spain, might well re-establish the absolute king at home. They fell into the tremendous error of taking the obedience of the soldier for the consent of the nation. Such confidence is the destruction of thrones. Men must neither sleep in the shadow of a manchineel-tree nor in that of an army.

Let us now return to the ship "Orion."

During the operations of the army commanded by the prince generalissimo, a squadron had cruised in the Mediterranean, to which, as we said, the "Orion" belonged, and was driven into Toulon roads to repair damages.

The presence of a man-of-war in a port has something

about it which attracts and engages the mob. It is grand, and the multitude loves anything that is grand.

A vessel of the line is one of the most magnificent combinations of the genius of man with the powers of nature. It is composed simultaneously of the heaviest and lightest of things, because it has to deal with three forms of substance at once,—the solid, the liquid, and the fluid, and must contend against all three. It has eleven iron claws with which to seize the granite of the sea-bed, and more wings and antennæ than the winged insect, to catch the wind in the clouds. Its breath issues from its one hundred and twenty guns as from enormous bugles, and haughtily replies to the thunder. Ocean tries to lead it astray in the frightful monotony of its waves. But the vessel has its soul,—its compass,—which guides it, and always shows it the north! and on dark nights its lanterns take the place of the stars. Hence it has tackle and canvas to oppose the wind; wood to oppose water; iron, copper, and lead to oppose the rocks; light to oppose darkness, and a needle to oppose immensity.

If we would form an idea of the gigantic proportions which, taken as a whole, constitute a vessel of the line, we need only visit one of the covered six-story construction docks at Toulon or Brest, where the vessels in course of construction are under a bell-glass, if we may venture the expression. That colossal beam is a yard; that huge column of wood of enormous length lying on the ground is the mainmast. Measured from its root in the keel to its truck in the clouds, it is three hundred and sixty feet in length, and three feet in diameter at its base. The English mainmast rises to a height of two hundred and seventeen feet above the water-line. The navy of our fathers employed hemp cables, but ours has chains; the mere pile of chain cable for a hundred-gun vessel is four feet high, twenty feet in width, eight feet deep. And then, again, in building such a vessel three thousand cords of wood are used; it is a floating forest.

And it must not be forgotten that we are here describing a man-of-war of forty years ago,—a simple sailing ves-

sel; steam, then in its infancy, has since added new miracles to the prodigy known as a warship. At the present day, for instance, the screw man-of-war is a surprising machine, propelled by a surface of canvas containing three thousand square yards, and an engine of two thousand five hundred horse-power.

To say nothing of these new marvels, the antique vessel of Christopher Columbus and De Ruyter is one of the great masterpieces of man. It is inexhaustible in strength as the infinite is in gales; it garners the wind in its sails; it is exact in the immense diffusion of the waves; it floats and it reigns.

And yet an hour comes when a gust breaks that yard, fifty feet in length, like a straw; when the wind bends that mast, four hundred feet in height, like a reed; when that anchor weighing thousands of pounds, is twisted in the jaws of the waves like a fisherman's hook in the jaws of a pike; when those monstrous cannon utter plaintive and useless groans, which the hurricane bears away into emptiness and night, and when all that power and majesty are swallowed up by a superior power and majesty.

Whenever an immense force is displayed only to culminate in immense weakness, it causes men to reflect. Hence in seaport towns curious persons throng around these marvellous machines of war and navigation, without exactly knowing why.

Every day, then, from morning till night, the quays and piers of Toulon were covered with numbers of idlers, whose business it was to stare at the "Orion."

This vessel had long been ailing. During previous voyages, barnacles had collected on her hull to such an extent that she had lost half her speed; she had gone into dry dock the year before to have these barnacles scraped off, and then put to sea again. But this scraping had injured the bolts; and when off the Balearic Isles, she sprang a leak and took in water, as vessels were not coppered in those days. A violent equinoctial gale supervened, which staved in a port-

hole on her larboard bows and damaged the fore-chains. In consequence of this, the "Orion" put into Toulon.

She anchored near the Arsenal for repairs. The hull was uninjured; but a few planks had been removed here and there to let in air, as is usually the case.

One morning the staring crowd witnessed an accident.

The crew were engaged in bending the sails; the top-man, who was out at the starboard earring of the main-top-sail, lost his balance. He was seen to totter, the crowd on the Arsenal quay uttered a cry, his head over-balanced his body and he turned round the yard, with his hands stretched toward the abyss; but he caught the foot-rope as he passed it, first with one hand, then with the other, and remained hanging from it. The sea lay below him at a dizzy depth; and the shock of his fall had given the foot-rope a violent swinging movement. The man swung at the end of the rope like a stone in a sling.

To go to his assistance would be running a frightful risk; and not one of the sailors, all coast fishermen lately levied for duty, dared to venture it. Still, the unlucky top-man was losing strength; his agony could not be seen in his face, but his exhaustion was visible in every limb, and his arms twitched awfully. Any effort which he made to raise himself only caused the foot-rope to oscillate the more; he did not cry out, for fear of exhausting his strength. The minute was close at hand when he must loose the rope; and every now and then all heads were turned away that his fall might not be seen. There are moments when a rope, a pole, the branch of a tree, is life itself; and it is a fearful thing to see a living being let go of it and fall like ripe fruit.

All at once a man was seen climbing the shrouds with the agility of a tiger-cat. As he was dressed in red, this man was a convict; as he wore a green cap, he was a convict for life. On reaching the top a puff of wind blew away his cap and displayed a white head; hence he was not a young man.

A convict, employed on board with a gang from the galleries, had, in fact, at once run up to the officer of the watch,

and in the midst of the trouble and confusion, while all the sailors trembled and shrank, asked permission to risk his life to save the top-man. At a nod of assent from the officer he broke with one blow of a hammer the chain riveted to his ankle, caught a rope, and darted up the shrouds. No one noticed at the moment with what ease the chain was broken; and the fact was not remembered till afterward.

In a second he was upon the yard, where he stood for a little while as if measuring it with his eye. These seconds during which the wind swung the top-man at the end of a thread, seemed ages to those who were looking on. At length the convict raised his eyes to heaven and advanced a step. The crowd breathed again as they saw him run along the yard. On reaching the end, he fastened to it the rope he had brought with him, let it hang, and then began to go down it hand-over-hand. This produced a feeling of indescribable agony; for, instead of one man hanging over the gulf, there were now two.

He looked like a spider about to seize a fly; but, in this case, the spider brought life and not death. Ten thousand eyes were fixed on the group; not a cry, not a word, was heard. The same shudder contracted every brow; every mouth held its breath, as if afraid of increasing in the slightest degree the wind that shook the two wretched men. The convict in the mean time had managed to get close to the sailor, and it was high time; for a minute later the man, exhausted and despairing, would have let himself drop into the sea.

The convict fastened him securely with the rope to which he clung with one hand, while he worked with the other. At length he was seen to climb back to the yard and haul the sailor up; he supported him there for a moment to let him regain his strength, then took him in his arms and carried him along the yard to the cap, and thence to the top, where he left him with his comrades.

The crowd applauded him, and several old sergeants of the chain-gang had tears in their eyes; women embraced each

other on the quay; and every voice shouted with a sort of frenzy, "Pardon for that man!"

The convict, however, began immediately the descent to rejoin his gang. In order to do so more rapidly he dropped into the rigging and ran along a lower yard. All eyes followed him; and at one moment the spectators felt afraid, for they fancied that he hesitated and tottered, either from fatigue or dizziness. All at once the crowd uttered a terrible cry; the convict had fallen into the sea.

The fall was a dangerous one, for the frigate "Algésiras" was anchored near the "Orion;" and the poor galley-slave had fallen between the two ships, and might easily be sucked under one of them. Four men hastily sprang into a boat, and the crowd encouraged them; fear again took possession of every soul. The man did not rise to the surface again, but disappeared in the sea without making a ripple, just as if he had fallen into a barrel of oil. They sounded, they dived, but in vain; the search was continued till nightfall, but his body was never found.

Next day the Toulon paper printed the following lines:

"Nov. 17, 1823.—Yesterday a convict, one of a gang on board the 'Orion,' fell into the sea and was drowned, as he was returning from assisting a sailor. His body has not been found, and is supposed to be entangled among the piles at Arsenal point. The man was imprisoned under the No. 9,430, and his name was Jean Valjean."

BOOK III

FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE MADE TO THE DEAD

CHAPTER I

THE WATER QUESTION AT MONTFERMEIL

MONTFERMEIL is situated between Livry and Chelles, on the southern slope of the lofty plateau which separates the Ourque from the Marne. At the present day it is a rather large place, adorned with stucco villas all the year round, and with holiday-making citizens on Sunday. In 1823 it had neither so many white houses nor so many well satisfied citizens as it has now, and it was merely a village in the woods. To be sure, there were here and there a few country-houses of the last century, recognizable by their air of pretension, their balconies of twisted iron, and the tall windows, whose tiny panes cast all sorts of green tints on the white of the closed shutters; but Montfermeil was none the less a village. Retired clothiers and country-loving lawyers had not yet discovered it. It was a quiet, pleasant spot which was not on the road to anywhere. People lived there cheaply that peasant life which is so bounteous and so easy. The only objectionable thing was that water was scarce, owing to the elevation of the plateau.

It had to be fetched from some distance. That end of the village which lay toward Gagny obtained its water from the splendid ponds in the forest; but the other end, which

surrounds the church, and which lies in the direction of Chelles, could only obtain drinking-water from a little spring half way down the hill, about a quarter of an hour's walk from Montfermeil, near the road to Chelles.

Laying in water was, therefore, a hard task for every family. The large houses and the aristocracy, among which Thénardier's pot-house may be reckoned, paid a farthing a bucket to a man whose trade it was, and who earned by it about eight sous a day. But this man only worked till seven P. M. in summer, and till five in winter; and once night had set in and the ground-floor shutters were closed, any person who had no water to drink must either fetch it himself or go without.

This was the terror of the poor creature whom the reader may not have forgotten,—little Cosette. It will be remembered that Cosette was useful to the Thénardiers in two ways,—they made the mother pay and the child act as servant. Hence when the mother ceased payment, for the reason which we know, the Thénardiers kept Cosette, who took the place of a servant. In this capacity she had to fetch water when it was wanted; and the child, terrified at the idea of going to the spring at night, was very careful that the house should never be without water. Christmas of 1823 was peculiarly brilliant at Montfermeil. The beginning of the winter was mild, and there had been neither snow nor frost. Some mountebanks, who came from Paris, had obtained leave from the mayor to erect their booths in the village high-street; and a party of travelling hawkers, by the same license, had put up their stalls in the Church Square, and even extended them into the lane in which Thénardier's pot-house was situated. This filled the inns and pot-houses, and produced a noisy, joyous life in that quiet little place. As a faithful historian, we are bound to add that among the curiosities displayed in the market-place was a menagerie, in which some frightful clowns, dressed in rags, and coming none knew whence, exhibited to the peasants of Montfermeil one of those terrific Brazilian vultures of which the Paris Museum did not possess

a specimen till 1845, and which have a tricoloured cockade for an eye. Naturalists, I believe, call the bird Caracara Polyborus. It belongs to the order of the Apicides and the family of the vultures. A few old Bonapartist soldiers living in the village went to see this bird with devotion; and the owners declared that the tricoloured cockade was a unique phenomenon, expressly produced by nature for their menagerie.

On Christmas eve itself, several carters and hawkers were sitting at table drinking round four or five candles in Thénardier's tap-room. This room was like those usually found in pot-houses; there were tables, pewter pots, bottles, drinkers, and smokers, but little light and a good deal of uproar. The date of the year was, however, indicated by two objects, fashionable at that time among the middle classes, and which stood on a table,—a kaleidoscope and a lamp of ribbed tin. Madame Thénardier was watching the supper, which was roasting before a bright fire, while her husband drank with his guests and talked politics.

In addition to the political remarks, which mainly referred to the Spanish war and the Duke d'Angoulême, local parentheses like the following could be heard through the babel:—

“Over at Nanterre and Suresne the vines have been very productive; and where people expected ten barrels, they have twelve. The grapes were very juicy when put under the press.”—“But the grapes could not have been ripe?”—“In those parts, they need not be ripe, for the wine becomes oily in spring.”—“Then it must be a very poor wine.”—“There are poorer wines than those about here,” etc.

Or else a miller exclaimed: “Are we responsible for what there is in a sack? We find a lot of small seeds which we can't take time to sift out, and which must go through the mill-stones,—such as tares, lucern, cockles, vetches, fennel, hemp-seed, and a number of other weeds, to say nothing of the pebbles which are so frequent in some sorts of wheat, especially Brittany wheat. I don't like grinding Brittany

wheat any more than pit-sawyers like sawing beams in which there are nails. You can fancy the bad dust all this makes in the hopper; and then people complain unfairly of the flour, for it is no fault of ours."

Between two windows was a mower seated at a table with a farmer, who was making a bargain to have a field mown in spring, said:—

"There is no harm in the grass being damp, for it cuts better. Dew is a good thing, sir. But all the same, your grass is tender, and hard to cut, sir; for it is so young, and bends before the scythe," etc.

Cosette sat in her usual place, on the cross-bar of the kitchen table, near the chimney. She was in rags; her bare feet were thrust into wooden shoes; and she was knitting, by the firelight, stockings intended for the young Thénardiers. A little kitten played about under the chairs. Two merry children were heard laughing and prattling in an adjoining room; they were Eponine and Azelma.

A cat-o'-nine-tails hung from a nail by the side of the chimney.

At times the cry of a baby somewhere in the house was heard above the noise of the tap-room. It was a little boy born to the Thénardiers one winter, "without knowing how," she used to say; "it was the effect of the cold." He was a little over three years old. The mother suckled him, but did not love him. When his cries became too troublesome, Thénardier would say, "There's your brat squalling; do go and see what he wants." "Bah!" the mother would answer, "he's a nuisance;" and the poor deserted little wretch would continue to cry in the darkness.

CHAPTER II

TWO FULL-LENGTH PORTRAITS

UP to the present, only a side view of the Thénardiers has been offered the reader of this book, but the moment has now come to walk round the couple and survey them from all sides.

Thénardier had passed his fiftieth year. Madame Thénardier was just in her fortieth, which is equal to fifty in a woman; and in this way there was a balance of age between husband and wife.

Our readers may probably have retained, from the first meeting, some recollection of this tall, light-haired, red, fat, square, enormous, and active woman. She belonged as we said, to the race of giantesses who show themselves at fairs, with paving-stones hanging from their hair. She did everything in the house,—made the beds, cleaned the rooms, was cook and laundress, produced rain and fine weather, and played the devil. Her only assistant was Cosette,—a mouse in the service of an elephant. All trembled at the sound of her voice,—windows, furniture, and people; and her large face, dotted with red spots, looked like a skimmer. She had a beard, and was the ideal of a Billingsgate porter dressed in female attire. She swore splendidly, and boasted of being able to crack a walnut with one blow of her fist. Had it not been for the romances she had read, which at times made the finikin woman appear under the ogress, no one would ever have dreamed of saying of her “that is a woman.” She seemed to be a cross between a wench and a fish-fag. When people heard her speak, they said, “ ‘Tis a policeman;” when they saw her drink, they said, “ ‘Tis a carter;” and when they saw her handle Cosette, they said, “ ‘Tis the hangman.” When she was quiet, one tooth projected from her mouth.

Thénardier was a short, thin, sallow, angular, bony, feeble fellow, who looked ill and was perfectly well; his cunning began with this. He smiled habitually through caution, and was polite to nearly everybody,—even to the beggar whom he refused a halfpenny. He had the eye of a ferret and the air of a man of letters, and greatly resembled the portraits of Abbé Delille. His coquetry consisted in drinking with carriers; and no one had ever been able to intoxicate him. He wore a blouse, and under it an old black coat. He made pretensions to literature and materialism. There were certain names that he frequently uttered in order to support an argument, such as Voltaire, Raynal, Parny, and, strangely enough, Saint Augustine. He declared that he had “a system.” He was a thorough scamp, however. It will be remembered that he asserted he had been a soldier, and told people with some vanity how, at Waterloo, where he was sergeant, in the 6th or 9th light something or other, he alone, against a squadron of death-dealing Hussars, had covered with his body and saved “a severely wounded general.” Hence came his flaring sign, and the name by which his house was generally known,—The Sergeant of Waterloo. He was liberal, classical, and Bonapartist. He had subscribed to the “Sheltering Arms;” and it was said in the village that he had studied for the priesthood.

We believe that he had simply studied in Holland to be an innkeeper. This scoundrel of composite order was in all probability some Fleming from Lille in Flanders, a Frenchman at Paris, a Belgian at Brussels, conveniently astride both frontiers. We know his prowess at Waterloo; and, as we see, he exaggerated slightly. Ebb and flow and wandering adventures were the elements of his existence. A tattered conscience entails an irregular life; and probably at the stormy period of June 18, 1815, Thénardier belonged to that variety of marauding sutlers to whom we have alluded, who go about the country selling to some, robbing others, and moving about with wife and children, in a broken-down cart after troops on the march, with an instinct for always joining the victorious

army. When the campaign was over, having, as he said, "some brads," he opened a pot-house at Montfermeil.

These "brads," consisting of purses and watches, gold rings and silver crosses, collected in harvest time in furrows sowed with corpses, did not make a heavy total, and did not carry this sutler turned innkeeper very far.

Thénardier had something rectangular in his movements, which when joined to an oath recalls the barracks, to the sign of the cross, the seminary. He was a clever speaker, and liked to be thought an educated man; but the school-master noticed that he made mistakes. He drew up a traveller's bill in a masterly way, but practised eyes sometimes found orthographical errors in it. Thénardier was cunning, greedy, indolent, and skilful. He did not despise his servant-girls, and for that reason his wife no longer kept any. The giantess was jealous, and fancied that this little yellow man must be an object of universal desire.

Thénardier above all, as a crafty and well-balanced man, was a villain of the temperate sort; and this breed is the worst, as hypocrisy is mixed up in them.

It was not that Thénardier was not at times capable of passion, at least quite as much as his wife, but it was very rare; and at such moments,—as he owed a grudge to the whole human race, as he had within him a profound furnace of hatred, as he was one of those persons who avenge themselves perpetually, who accuse everybody who passes before them of whatever befalls them, and who are ever ready to cast upon the first-comer, as a legitimate grievance, the whole of the annoyance, bankruptcies, and deceptions of their life,—when all this leaven worked within him and boiled forth from his mouth and eyes, he was fearful. Woe to the person who came under his fury at such times.

In addition to his other qualities, Thénardier was attentive and penetrating, silent or talkative, according to occasion, and always very intelligent. He had the glance of sailors who are accustomed to shut up one eye to look through a telescope. Thénardier was a statesman.

Any new-comer, on entering the pot-house, said upon seeing the woman, "That is the master of the house;" but it was an error,—she was not even the mistress. Her husband was both master and mistress. She worked, and he originated. He directed everything by a sort of invisible and continuous magnetic action; a word, sometimes a sign, from him was sufficient, and the mastodon obeyed. The husband was to his wife, though she did not fully realize it, a peculiar and sovereign being. She had her virtues; however much she might dissent from "Monsieur Thénardier,"—an inadmissible hypothesis, by the way,—she would never have proved him publicly in the wrong for any consideration. She would never have committed "in the presence of strangers" that fault which wives so often commit, and which is called, in parliamentary language, "exposing the crown." Although their agreement only resulted in evil, Madame Thénardier's submission to her husband was something to contemplate. That mountain of noise and flesh moved under the little finger of that frail despot. Considered from its dwarfish and grotesque side, it was that great and universal thing,—adoration of mind by matter. There was something strange about Thénardier, and hence the absolute dominion of the man over the woman. At certain moments she saw him as a lighted candle, at others she felt him as a claw.

This woman was a terrible creature, who loved only her children, and feared only her husband. She was a mother because she was mammiferous. Her maternity ceased, however, with her girls, and, as we shall see, did not extend to boys.

Thénardier, himself, had only one thought,—to enrich himself. He did not succeed, for a suitable stage was wanting for his great talent. Thénardier ruined himself at Mont-fermeil, if ruin is possible to zero; in Switzerland or the Pyrenees he would have become a millionaire. But where fate fastens a landlord, there he must browse.

In this same year, 1823, Thénardier was in debt to the amount of fifteen hundred francs, which rendered him anxious.

Whatever might be the obstinate injustice of destiny in his case, Thénardier was one of those men who thoroughly understand, and in the most modern fashion, that thing which is a virtue in barbarous nations, and an article of sale among civilized nations,—hospitality. He was also an admirable poacher, and renowned for the correctness of his aim. He had a certain cold and quiet laugh, which was peculiarly dangerous.

His theories as a landlord burst forth from him at times in flashes, and he had professional aphorisms which he drove into his wife's mind. "The duty of a landlord," he said one day savagely, and in a low voice, "is to sell to the first-comer stews, rest, light, fire, dirty sheets, chamber-maids, fleas, and smiles; to stop passers-by, empty small purses, and honestly lighten heavy ones; to shelter travelling families respectfully; to shave the husband, pluck the wife, and pick the children clean; to set a price on the open window, the shut window, the chimney-corner, the easy-chair, the sofa, the stool, the feather-bed, the mattress, and the truss of straw; to know how much the reflection wears out the looking-glass, and to charge for it; and, by the five hundred thousand fiends, to make the traveller pay for everything, even to the flies that his dog eats!"

This husband and this wife were ruse and rage married, and formed a hideous and terrible pair.

While the husband ruminated and combined, the she Thénardier did not think about absent creditors, paid no heed to yesterday or to-morrow, and lived violently only for the moment.

Such were these two beings between whom stood Cosette, enduring their double pressure, like a creature who is at once crushed by a mill-stone and torn with a pair of pincers. Man and wife had each a different way. Cosette was beaten,—that was the wife's way; she went barefoot in winter,—that was the husband's way.

Cosette went up and down stairs, washed, brushed, scrubbed, swept, ran about, trotted hither and thither, panted

for breath, moved heavy weights, and, little though she was, did all the hard work. She got no pity from a ferocious mistress and a venomous master; and The Sergeant of Waterloo was, as it were, a web in which Cosette was caught and lay trembling.

The ideal of oppression was realized by this gloomy household. It was something like a fly serving spiders.

The poor child was passive and held her tongue.

What takes place within the souls which have just left the presence of God, and find themselves thus, at their very dawn, so little and so naked among human beings?

CHAPTER III

MEN WANT WINE, AND HORSES WATER

FOUR new travellers appeared.

Cosette was sorrowfully reflecting, for though only eight years of age, she had already suffered so much that she meditated with the mournful air of an old woman.

Her eyelid was blackened by a blow which her mistress had given her, which made the woman say now and then, "How ugly she is with her black eye!"

Cosette was thinking that it was late, very late; that she had been suddenly obliged to fill the jugs and bottles in the rooms of the travellers who had just arrived, and that there was no water in the cistern.

What reassured her most was the fact that but little water was drunk at The Sergeant of Waterloo. There was no lack of thirsty souls, but it was that sort of thirst which applies more readily to the wine-jug than to the water-pitcher. Any one who asked for a glass of water among the glasses of wine would have appeared a savage to all those men. At one moment, however, the child trembled. Her mistress raised

the cover of a stew-pan, bubbling on the stove, then seized a glass and hurried to the cistern. She turned the faucet. The child raised her head, and watched all the woman's movements. A thin stream of water ran from the tap and half filled the glass.

"Hullo," she said, "there is no water;" then she was silent for a moment. The child did not breathe.

"Well," continued Madame Thénardier, as she examined the half-filled glass, "this will be enough."

Cosette returned to her work, but for more than a quarter of an hour she felt her heart leap in her bosom. She counted the minutes that passed thus, and wished that it were next morning.

From time to time one of the topers looked out into the street and said, "It's as black as pitch," or, "A man must needs be a cat to go about the streets at this hour without a lantern," and Cosette shivered.

All at once one of the pedlers lodging at the inn came in and said in a harsh voice:—

"My horse has had no water."

"Oh, yes, it has," said Madame Thénardier.

"I tell you it has not, mother," retorted the pedler.

Cosette had crept out from under the table.

"Oh, yes, sir," said she, "your horse has had a drink. He drank a bucketful,—a whole bucketful; I gave him the water myself, and I talked to him."

This was not true; Cosette lied.

"There's a girl no bigger than one's fist who tells a lie as big as a house," exclaimed the pedler. "I tell you he has not been watered, you little devil. He has a way of blowing when he has not been watered which I know well."

Cosette persisted, and added in a voice hoarse with anguish, and scarcely audible:—

"Oh, indeed, the horse drank a lot."

"Enough of this," said the pedler, savagely; "water my horse, and say no more."

Cosette went back under the table.

"Well, that is but fair," said the landlady. "If the brute has not been watered, he must be." Then she looked around her. "Why, where is the little devil?" She stooped down and discovered Cosette hidden at the other end of the table, almost under the feet of the topers. "Come out of that," shouted her mistress.

Cosette came out of the hole in which she had hidden herself, and the landlady continued:—

"Miss What's-your-name, go and water the horse."

"There is no water, ma'am," said Cosette, faintly.

Her mistress threw the street door wide open.

"Well, then go and fetch some."

Cosette hung her head and fetched an empty bucket standing in a corner near the chimney.

The bucket was larger than herself, and she could have sat down in it comfortably.

Madame Thénardier returned to her stove and tasted the contents of the stew-pan with a wooden spoon, growling:—

"There's plenty at the spring. There never was such a careless brat.—I believe it would have been better to strain the onions." Then she rummaged in a drawer which contained copper coins, pepper, and shallots. "Here, Miss Toad," she added, "as you come back, yon can fetch a loaf from the baker's. Here's a fifteen-sous piece."

Cosette had a small pocket in her apron, in which she placed the coin, without saying a word. Then she stood motionless, bucket in hand, with the open door before her. She seemed waiting for some one to come to her rescue.

"Be off," shouted her mistress.

Cosette went out and shut the door after her.



"The poor child stopped, petrified; for she had not seen this doll so close before."

Les Misérables. Cosette: Page 95.

CHAPTER IV

A DOLL COMES UPON THE SCENE

THE line of open-air shops which started at the church, it will be remembered, ran as far as Thénardier's inn. These stalls were all lit up, because people would soon be going by to the midnight mass, with candles in paper funnels, which, as the school-master, who was at this moment seated in Thénardier's tap-room, declared, produced a "magical effect." To make up for this, not a star glittered in the sky.

The last of these booths, exactly facing Thénardier's door, was a toy-shop, all flashing with tinsel, glass beads, and magnificent things in block-tin. Right in front, the dealer had placed on a background of white napkins, an enormous doll, nearly two feet high, dressed in a pink crape gown, with golden wheat-ears in her hair,— real hair; and this doll had enamel eyes. The whole day had this marvel been displayed, to the amazement of all passers-by under ten years of age; but not a mother in Montfermeil had been rich enough or extravagant enough to give it to her child. Eponine and Azelma had spent hours in contemplating it, and even Cosette had ventured to take a furtive look at it.

When Cosette went out, bucket in hand, though she felt so sad and desolate, she could not refrain from raising her eyes to the prodigious doll,— the "lady," as she called it. The poor child stopped, petrified; for she had not seen this doll so close before. The whole stall seemed to her a palace; and the doll was not a doll, but a vision. Joy, splendour, wealth, and happiness appeared in a sort of chimerical glory to the unhappy little creature, who was so deeply buried in mournful and chilly misery. With the simple and sad sagacity of childhood, Cosette measured the abyss which separated her from that doll. She said to herself that a

person must be a queen or at least a princess to have a "thing" like that. She looked at the fine dress, the long smooth hair, and thought, "How happy that doll must be!" She could not take her eyes off this fantastic stall, and the more she looked the more dazzled she became. She fancied she was looking into paradise. There were other dolls behind the large one, which appeared to her fairies and genii. The tradesman, who walked about at the back of the stall, seemed to her something more than mortal.

In this adoration she forgot everything, even the errand on which she was sent; but suddenly the rough voice of her mistress recalled her to reality. "What! you little devil, have you not gone? Just wait till I come to you! What are you doing there? Get along, you little toad!"

Madame Thénardier had taken a look out into the street, and seen Cosette in ecstasy.

The child ran off with her bucket, making the longest strides that she could.

CHAPTER V

COSETTE ALONE

AS Thénardier's inn was in that part of the village nearest the church, Cosette had to fetch water from the spring in the forest on the Chelles side.

She did not look at another stall. So long as she was in the lane and the vicinity of the church, the illuminated booths lit up the road; but the last gleam of the last stall soon disappeared, and the poor child found herself in darkness. She plunged into it; but, as fear overcame her, she shook the handle of her bucket as much as she could as she walked along, and this made a noise that kept her company.

The farther she went, the more dense the gloom became.

There was no one in the streets except a woman, who turned as she passed, and muttered between her teeth, "Wherever can the child be going? Can she be a goblin?" Then she recognized Cosette. "Why," she said, "it is the Lark."

Cosette, in this way, went through the labyrinth of winding, deserted streets which ends the village of Montfermeil in the direction of Chelles; and so long as she had houses, or even walls, on both sides of the way, she walked rather boldly. From time to time she saw a candle glimmer through the crack of a shutter; it was light and life, people were there, and this reassured her. But as she advanced, her steps became slower, as if mechanically; and when she had passed the corner of the last house, Cosette stopped. To go beyond the last stall had been difficult, but to go farther than the last house was impossible. She put her bucket on the ground, plunged her hand into her hair, and began to scratch her head slowly,—a gesture peculiar to terrified and undecided children. It was no longer Montfermeil, but the open fields. Black, deserted space lay before her. She looked in despair at this space where there was nobody, but where there were beasts, and where there might be ghosts. She looked out, and heard beasts walking in the grass, and distinctly saw ghosts moving among the trees. Then she seized her bucket again, and fear lent her courage. "Well," she said, "I will tell her that there was no water;" and she boldly re-entered Montfermeil.

She had scarce gone one hundred yards when she stopped and began to scratch her head again. Now it was her mistress who appeared to her,—her hideous mistress with her hyena mouth, and fury flashing in her eyes. The child cast a piteous glance before her and behind her. What should she do? What would become of her? Where should she go? Before her was the ghost of her mistress; behind her all the phantoms of night and the forest. It was from her mistress that she shrank. She turned back in the direction of the spring, and began to run. She left the village running, she entered the wood running, looking at nothing,

hearing nothing. She did not pause till her breath failed, but she still went on, wildly.

As she ran she felt inclined to cry, for the nocturnal rustling of the forest completely surrounded her.

She did not think, she did not see; the immensity of night faced this little creature. On one side was darkness, on the other an atom.

It was only seven or eight minutes walk from the edge of the wood to the spring; and Cosette knew the road, having gone there several times every day. Strange to say, she did not lose her way; for a remnant of instinct vaguely guided her. Still, she did not look either to the right or left, for fear of seeing things in the branches and shrubs. In this way she reached the spring.

It was a narrow, natural basin hollowed by the water in a clayey soil, about two feet in depth, surrounded by moss and those tall crimped grasses called "Henri IV.'s ruffs," and paved with a few heavy stones. A rivulet ran from it with a little gentle murmur.

Cosette did not take time to breathe. It was very dark, but she was accustomed to come to this spring. She felt, with her left hand, in the dark for a young oak that leaned over the spring, and usually served her as a support, caught a branch, stooped down, and plunged the bucket into the water. She was in such a violent state of excitement that her strength was trebled. While thus bent over, she did not notice that the pocket of her apron emptied itself into the stream, and that the fifteen-sous piece fell into the water. She neither saw nor heard it fall; she drew up the bucket nearly full and placed it on the grass.

This done, she felt exhausted with fatigue. She would have liked to start again at once, but the effort of filling the bucket had been so great that she found it impossible to move a step. She was forced to sit down. She fell on the grass, and crouched there, utterly exhausted.

She shut her eyes, then opened them again, not knowing why, but unable to do otherwise. By her side, the water

stirring in the bucket made circles that looked like snakes of white fire.

Over her head, the sky was covered with huge black clouds which seemed like masses of smoke. The tragic mask of gloom seemed to bend vaguely over the child.

Jupiter was setting in the depths.

The child gazed with a wondering eye at this large star, which she did not know, and which terrified her. The planet, in fact, was at this moment very near the horizon, and was passing through a dense layer of fog, which gave it a horrible red tinge. The fog, which was of a gloomy purple hue, magnified the planet, and it looked like a luminous wound.

A cold wind blew from the plain. The wood was dark, but there was no rustling of leaves, and none of the vague, fresh gleams of summer. Large branches stood out frightfully. Shapeless, stunted bushes soughed in the glades. The tall grass twined under the breeze like eels, and the brambles writhed like long arms provided with claws seeking to clutch their prey. A few withered bits of fern, driven by the breeze, passed rapidly by, and seemed flying before something that was coming after.

Darkness produces dizziness. Man requires light; and any one who enters the opposite of day feels his heart contract. When the eye sees darkness, the soul sees trouble; in an eclipse, in night, in sooty opaqueness, there is terror even to the stoutest heart. No one walks alone at night in a forest without a tremor, for shadows and trees are formidable densities. A chimerical reality appears in the indistinct depths; the inconceivable is visible a few paces from you with spectral clearness. You see floating in space, or in your own brain, something vague and intangible, like the dreams of sleeping flowers. There are stern attitudes on the horizon, and you breathe the effluvia of the great black void. You are afraid and yet inclined to look behind you. The cavities of night, things grown haggard, silent outlines which disappear as you advance, irritated tufts, lurid pools, the

lugubrious reflected in the mournful, the sepulchral immensity of silence, possible strange beings, bending of mysterious branches, frightful torsos of trees, long waves of quivering grass,— you are defenceless against all this. There is no man, however bold, who does not shudder, and recognize the proximity of anguish; something hideous is felt, as if the soul were amalgamated with the shades. This penetration of darkness is indescribably sinister in a child.

Forests are apocalypses; and the beating of the wings of a tiny soul produces a sound of death beneath their monstrous dome.

Without understanding what she experienced, Cosette felt herself affected by this black enormity of nature. It was no longer terror alone that overpowered her, but something even more terrible than terror. She shuddered; and words fail us to describe the strange nature of that shudder which chilled her to the heart. Her eye grew fierce, and she felt as if she could not prevent herself from returning to the same spot, at the same hour, on the morrow.

Then, by a sort of instinct, and in order to escape from this singular state which she did not understand, but which terrified her, she began to count aloud, one, two, three, four, up to ten; and when she finished, she began again. This restored her to a true perception of the things that surrounded her. She felt the coldness of her hands, which she had wetted in drawing the water. She rose, for fear had seized upon her again,— a natural and insurmountable fear. She had only one thought left,— to fly, fly at full speed through the wood, and across the fields, as far as the houses, the windows, and the lighted candles. Her eye fell on the bucket before her; and such was the terror with which her mistress inspired her that she did not dare to fly without the bucket. She seized the handle with both hands and found that she could hardly lift the pail.

She proceeded thus for about a dozen yards; but the bucket was full and heavy, and she was compelled to set it on the ground. She breathed for a moment, and then lifted

it and started again, this time going a little farther. But she was still obliged to stop once more, and after a few moments' rest, set out again. She walked with body bent forward and drooping head, like an old woman; and the weight of the bucket strained and stiffened her thin arms. The iron handle numbed and froze her small, wet hands. From time to time she was forced to stop, and each time she did so the cold water from the bucket splashed her bare legs. This occurred in the heart of a wood, at night in winter, far from any human eye. She was a child of eight, and God alone at that moment saw that sorrowful sight.

And her mother too, no doubt, alas! For there are things which open the eyes of the dead in their graves.

She breathed with a sort of painful rattle. Sobs contracted her throat; but she did not dare cry, for she was so afraid of her mistress, even at a distance. It was her habit always to imagine Madame Thénardier present.

Still, she did not make much progress in this way; and she walked very slowly, although she strove to lessen the length of her halts, and to walk as long as she possibly could between them. She thought with agony that it would take her more than an hour to get back to Montfermeil in this way, and that her mistress would beat her. This agony was mingled with her terror at being alone in the wood at night; she was worn out with fatigue, and had not yet left the forest. On reaching an old chestnut-tree which she knew, she made a last halt, longer than the rest, in order to get thoroughly rested; then she collected all her strength, took up the bucket again, and resumed her walk courageously. Still, the poor little creature in her despair could not refrain from exclaiming, "O God! O God!"

Suddenly she felt that the bucket no longer weighed anything; a hand, which seemed to her enormous, had seized the handle, and was vigorously lifting it. She raised her head, and saw a tall black form, straight and erect, walking beside her in the darkness. It was a man who had come up behind her, and whom she had not heard. This man, without saying

a word, had seized the handle of the bucket which she was carrying.

There is an instinct in every meeting of this life.
The child felt no fear.

CHAPTER VI

PERHAPS PROVES BOULATRUELLE'S INTELLIGENCE

ON the afternoon of that same Christmas day, 1823, a man walked for a long time about the most desolate part of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, in Paris. He seemed looking for a lodging, and stopped by choice at the most shabby houses in this outskirt of the Faubourg St. Marceau.

As we shall see presently, this man had really hired a bedroom in this isolated district.

Both in dress and person he realized the type of what may be called the respectable mendicant, or extreme misery combined with extreme cleanliness. This is a very rare combination, which inspires intelligent minds with the twofold respect felt for the man who is very poor and the man who is very worthy. He wore a very old and carefully brushed round hat, a threadbare coat of coarse yellow-ochre-coloured cloth,—a colour which was not absolutely odd at that day,—a long waistcoat with enormous pockets, black breeches which had turned gray at the knees, black worsted stockings, and stout shoes with brass buckles. He looked like the tutor of a good family, returned from emigration. From his white hair, wrinkled forehead, livid lips, and his face in which everything revealed weariness of life, he might have been supposed much beyond sixty years of age; but his firm though slow step, and the singular vigour of all his movements, made him look scarce fifty. The wrinkles on his forehead were well placed, and would have favourably disposed

Any one who observed him closely. His lip was contracted by a strange curve, which seemed severe, but was humble; and there was a mournful serenity in his look. He carried in his left hand a small parcel tied up in a handkerchief, and in his right he had a stick cut from a hedge. This stick had been carefully trimmed, and was not too bad looking. The most had been made of the knots, and a coral knob had been made with red sealing-wax; it was a cudgel and seemed a cane.

Few people pass along this boulevard, especially in winter. This man, however, seemed to avoid rather than seek them, though without affectation.

At this period, Louis XVIII. went almost daily to Choisy le Roi, it being one of his favourite drives. At two o'clock the royal carriage and escort could almost invariably be seen passing at full gallop along the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

This did as well as a clock or a watch for the poor women of the district, who said, "It is two o'clock, for *he* is returning to the Tuilleries."

And some ran alongside, and others drew up in line; for the passing of a king always produces a tumult. Moreover, the appearance and disappearance of Louis XVIII. produced a certain effect in the streets of Paris, for it was rapid but majestic. This impotent king had a taste for galloping. Unable to walk, he wished to run; and this cripple would have liked to be drawn by lightning. He passed, calm and stern, amid drawn swords; his heavy, gilded coach, with large branches of lilies painted on the panels, rolled noisily along. There was scarce time to glance at him. You saw in the right-hand corner, upon white satin cushions, a broad, firm, red face, a brow freshly powdered à *l'oiseau royal*, a proud, hard, artful eye, an intelligent smile, two heavy epaulets of twisted fringe upon a civilian coat; the Golden Fleece, the cross of St. Louis, the cross of the Legion of Honour, the silver medallion of the Holy Ghost, a large stomach, and a wide blue ribbon; it was the king. When outside of Paris, he carried his white plumed hat on his knees, which were

wrapped in long English gaiters; when he returned to the city, he put his hat on his head, and bowed rarely. He looked at the people coldly, and they returned the compliment. When he appeared for the first time in the Faubourg St. Marceau, his entire success consisted of a remark made by a workman to his chum,—“That fat man is the government.”

The infallible passage of the king at the same hour was the daily event of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The promenader in the yellow coat plainly did not belong to that quarter, and probably not to Paris, for he was ignorant of this fact. When at two o'clock the royal carriage, surrounded by Life Guards covered with silver lace, turned into the boulevard, after coming round the Salpêtrière, he seemed surprised and almost terrified. As he was alone in the walk, he quickly concealed himself behind a corner of the wall; but this did not prevent the Duke d'Havré from noticing him. The duke, as captain of the guards on duty that day, was seated in the carriage opposite the king. He said to his Majesty, “There is an ill-looking fellow.” The policemen who cleared the way for the king also noticed him; and one of them received orders to follow him. But the man turned into the solitary streets of the Faubourg; and as night was setting in, the agent lost his trail, as is proved by a report addressed the same evening to Count Anglès, Minister of State and Prefect of Police.

When the man in the yellow coat had thrown the police agent off his track, he doubled his pace, though not without looking back many times to make sure that he was not followed. At a quarter-past four,—that is to say, at night-fall,—he passed in front of the Porte St. Martin theatre, where the “Two Convicts” was to be performed that evening.

This bill, lit up by the theatre lamps, struck him; for, though he was walking rapidly, he stopped to read it. A moment later he entered The Pewter Platter, which was at that time the office of the Lagny coach, which started at half-past four. The horses were put in, and the passengers,

summoned by the driver, were hastily clambering up the lofty iron steps of the vehicle.

The man asked:—

“Have you a seat left?”

“Only one, by my side, on the box,” said the driver.

“I will take it.”

“Get up,” said the driver.

Before starting, however, he took a glance at the passenger's poor dress, and the smallness of his bundle, and asked for the fare.

“Are you going all the way to Lagny?” he said.

“Yes,” answered the man.

The traveller paid his fare to Lagny, and the coach started. After passing the city gate the driver tried to get up a conversation; but the traveller only answered in monosyllables, so the driver began to whistle and swear at his horses.

As the night was cold, the driver wrapped himself in his cloak, but the passenger did not seem to notice it. Thus they passed Gournay and Neuilly-sur-Marne. At about six o'clock they reached Chelles, where the driver stopped for a moment to let his horses breathe, at an inn lately opened in the old buildings of the Royal Abbey.

“I shall get down here,” said the man.

He took his bundle and stick and jumped off the coach. A moment after he had disappeared.

He did not enter the inn.

When the coachman started again a few moments later, he did not meet him in the high-street, and he turned to his inside passengers.

“That man,” he said, “does not belong to these parts, for I do not know him. He looks as if he had not a penny, and yet he don't care for money. He paid his fare to Lagny and only came as far as Chelles. It is night, all the houses are closed, he has not gone into the inn, and yet I can't see him, so he must have sunk into the ground.”

The man had not sunk into the ground, but walked has-

tily along the main street of Chelles, in the darkness; then he turned to his left before reaching the church, into a cross-road leading to Montfermeil, like a man who knows the country, and has been there before.

He followed this road rapidly; and at the spot where it is intersected by the old tree-bordered road that runs from Gagny to Lagny he heard wayfarers coming. He hurriedly concealed himself in a ditch and waited till they had passed. The precaution, however, was almost superfluous; for, as we have said, it was a very dark December night, and only two or three stars were visible in the sky.

The man did not return to the Montfermeil road, but struck across the fields to his right, and hurried in the direction of the wood.

When he was in the wood he slackened his pace, and began to look carefully at all the trees, advancing step by step, as if seeking and following a mysterious road known to himself alone. There was a moment when he seemed to lose himself, and appeared undecided; but at last, by repeated groping, he reached a glade where there was a pile of large white stones. He walked hurriedly toward these stones and attentively examined them, as if passing them in review. A large tree, covered with those excrescences which are the warts of vegetation, stood a few paces away from the heap. He went up to it and passed his hand over the bark, as if trying to recognize and count all the warts.

Opposite this tree, which was an ash, there was a sickly chestnut shedding its bark, upon which a ring of zinc had been nailed as a poultice; he stood on tiptoe and felt this ring. Then he examined for some time the ground in the space between the tree and the stones, as if assuring himself that the ground had not been freshly turned up.

This done, he looked about him, and resumed his walk through the wood.

It was this man who met Cosette.

While proceeding in the direction of Montfermeil he saw that little shadow depositing a load on the ground, then tak-

ing it up again and continuing her journey. He went up, and found that it was a young child carrying an enormous bucket of water. Then he went up to her and silently took the bucket-handle.

CHAPTER VII

COSETTE IN THE DARK WITH THE STRANGER

C OSETTE, as we said, was not frightened.
The man spoke to her in a grave, low voice.
“ My child, what you are carrying is very heavy.”
Cosette raised her head and replied:—
“ Yes, sir.”
“ Give it to me,” the man continued; “ I will carry it.”
Cosette let go of the bucket, and the man walked on by her side.

“ It is really very heavy,” he muttered; then added:
“ How old are you, little one?”
“ Eight, sir.”
“ And have you come far with this?”
“ From the spring in the wood.”
“ And how far have you to go?”
“ About a quarter of an hour’s walk.”
The man stopped for a moment, and then said suddenly:—
“ Then you have no mother?”
“ I do not know,” the child answered. Before the man had time to speak, she continued: “ I do not think so; other girls have one, but I have not.” And after a silence, she added, “ I think I never had one.”

The man stopped, put the bucket on the ground, and laid his two hands on her shoulders, making an effort to see her face in the darkness.

Cosette’s thin, sallow countenance was vaguely visible in the lurid gleam of the sky.

"What is your name?" asked the man.

"Cosette."

The man seemed to have received an electric shock; he looked at her again, then removed his hands, took up the bucket, and continued his walk.

A moment after he asked:—

"Where do you live, little one?"

"At Montfermeil, if you know the place."

"Are we going there?"

"Yes, sir."

There was another pause, and then he began again:

"Who sent you to fetch water from the wood at this hour?"

"Madame Thénardier."

The man continued in a tone which he strove to render careless, but in which there was, for all that, a singular tremor:—

"Who is this Madame Thénardier?"

"She is my mistress," said the child, "and she keeps the inn."

"The inn?" said the man; "well, I will lodge there tonight. Show me the way."

"We are going to it."

Though the man walked rather quickly, Cosette had no difficulty in keeping up with him; she no longer felt fatigue, and from time to time raised her eyes to this man with indescribable calmness and confidence. She had never been taught to turn toward Providence and to pray, and yet she felt within her something like hope and joy which rose to heaven.

After the lapse of a few minutes the man continued:

"Does Madame Thénardier keep no servant?"

"No, sir."

"Is there no one but you?"

"No, sir." There was another silence, and then Cosette lifted up her voice: "That is to say, there are two little girls."

"What little girls?"

“ ‘Ponine and ‘Zelma.’”

The child simplified in this way the romantic names dear to Madame Thénardier.

“ Who are they? ”

“ They are Madame Thénardier’s young ladies,— her daughters.”

“ And what do they do? ”

“ Oh,” said the child, “ they have handsome dolls, and things all covered with gold. They play about and amuse themselves.”

“ All day? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And you? ”

“ Oh, I work.”

“ All day? ”

The child raised her large eyes, in which stood a tear, invisible in the darkness, and replied softly: —

“ Yes, sir.” After a silence she continued, “ Sometimes, when I have finished my work, and they allow me, I amuse myself, too.”

“ In what way? ”

“ As I can. They let me alone; but I have not many toys. ‘Ponine and ‘Zelma do not like me to play with their dolls, and I have only a little leaden sword, no longer than that.”

The child held out her little finger.

“ And which does not cut? ”

“ Oh, yes, sir,” said the child, “ it cuts salad, and chops off flies’ heads.”

They reached the village, and Cosette guided the stranger through the streets. As they passed the baker’s shop, Cosette did not think of the loaf which she was to bring in. The man had ceased questioning her, and preserved a gloomy silence; but when they had left the church behind them, on seeing all the open-air booths he asked Cosette: —

“ Is it the fair-time? ”

“ No, sir; it is Christmas.”

When they approached the inn, Cosette touched his arm timidly.

“Sir.”

“What is it, my child?”

“We are close to the house.”

“Well?”

“Will you let me carry my bucket now?”

“Why?”

“Because mistress will beat me if she sees that some one carried it for me.”

The man gave her the bucket, and a moment later they were at the door of the pot-house.

CHAPTER VIII

IS HE RICH OR POOR

COSSETTE could not refrain from taking a side glance at the large doll which was still displayed at the toy-shop, then she tapped at the door; it opened, and Madame Thénardier appeared, candle in hand.

“Oh, it’s you, you little devil. Well, I’ll be hanged if you have not taken time enough; you’ve been playing, I expect.”

“Ma’am,” said Cosette, trembling from head to foot, “this gentleman wants a room.”

Madame Thénardier exchanged her angry look for an amiable grimace (a change peculiar to landladies), and greedily turned her eyes on the new-comer.

“Is this the gentleman?” she said.

“Yes, madame,” answered the man, touching his hat.

Rich travellers are not so polite. This gesture and an inspection of the stranger’s clothes and luggage, which the landlady took in at a glance, caused the amiable grimace to

disappear and the gruff look to return. She continued dryly:—

“ Come in, my good man.”

The “ good man ” entered ; the landlady gave him a second look, carefully examined his threadbare coat and shabby hat, and consulted her husband, who was still drinking with the carter, by a toss of the head, a curl of her nose, and a wink. The husband answered with that imperceptible movement of the forefinger which, laid on the puffed-out lips, signifies, “ No go.” Upon this the landlady exclaimed:—

“ My good man, I am very sorry, but I haven’t a room disengaged.”

“ Put me where you like,” said the man, “ in the attic or in the stable. I will pay as if it were a bedroom.”

“ Forty sous.”

“ Be it so.”

“ Forty sous ! ” a carrier whispered to the landlady ; “ why, it is only twenty sous.”

“ It’s forty for a man like him,” Madame Thénardier replied in the same tone. “ I do not lodge poor people for less.”

“ That is true,” the husband added gently ; “ it injures a house to have customers of that sort.”

Meanwhile the man, after laying his bundle and stick on a bench, sat down at a table on which Cosette had hastily placed a bottle of wine and a glass. The pedler who had asked for the bucket of water, himself carried it to his horse, while Cosette returned to her place under the kitchen table and her knitting.

The man, who had scarce moistened his lips with the glass of wine which he poured out, gazed at the child with strange attention.

Cosette was ugly ; but had she been happy, she might possibly have been pretty. We have already sketched her little overclouded face ; Cosette was thin and sickly, and, though eight years of age, looked hardly six. Her large eyes, sunken in a sort of shadow, were almost extinguished

by constant crying, while the corners of her mouth had that curve of habitual agony which may be observed in condemned prisoners and in patients who are given over. "Her hands were," as her mother had foretold, "ruined with chil-blains." The firelight, which shone upon her at this moment, brought out the angles of her bones and rendered her thinness frightfully apparent; as she constantly shivered, she had grown into the habit of keeping her knees pressed against each other. Her entire clothing was a rag, which would have aroused pity in summer, and which caused horror in winter. She had only torn calico upon her person, and not a morsel of woollen stuff; her skin was here and there visible, and everywhere could be distinguished blue or black marks, indicating the spots where her mistress had beaten her. Her bare legs were red and rough, and the hollow between her shoulder-blades would have moved you to tears. The whole person of this child, her look, her attitude, the sound of her voice, the interval between one word and the next, her manner, her silence, her slightest movement, expressed and revealed but one idea,—fear.

Fear was spread all over her; she was, so to speak, clothed in it. Fear drew up her elbows against her hips, withdrew her heels under her petticoats, made her occupy as little room as possible, breathe only when absolutely necessary, and had become what might be called the habit of her body, without any possible variation save an increase. There was a corner in her eye in which terror lurked.

Her fear was so great that on returning wet through, she did not dare go to the fire, but silently began her work again.

The expression of the child's eye was habitually so gloomy and at times so tragic, that it seemed at certain moments as if she were on the point of becoming either an idiot or a demon.

Never, as we said, had she known what prayer was; never had she set foot in a church. "Can I spare the time for it?" Madame Thénardier used to say.

The man in the yellow coat did not take his eyes off Cosette.

All at once her mistress cried:—

“ Hullo! where’s the loaf? ”

Cosette, according to her custom whenever Madame Thénardier raised her voice, came quickly from under the table.

She had completely forgotten the loaf, and had recourse to the expedient of terrified children,—she told a falsehood.

“ Ma’am, the baker was shut up.”

“ You ought to have knocked.”

“ I did knock, but he would not open.”

“ I shall know to-morrow whether that is the truth,” said her mistress, “ and if it is not, look out, that’s all. In the mean while give me back my fifteen-sous piece.”

Cosette plunged her hand into the pocket of her apron and turned green; the coin was no longer there.

“ Well,” said her mistress, “ did you not hear me? ”

Cosette turned her pocket inside out, but there was nothing in it; what could have become of the money? The wretched little creature could not find a word to say; she was petrified.

“ Have you lost it? ” her mistress asked, “ or are you trying to rob me? ” At the same time she stretched out her hand to the cat-o'-nine tails.

This fearful gesture gave Cosette the strength to cry:—

“ Mercy, ma’am; I will never do it again.”

Madame Thénardier took down the whip.

The man in the yellow coat had been feeling in his waist-coat-pocket, though no one noticed it. Moreover, the other guests were drinking or card-playing, and paid no attention to him.

Cosette had retreated in agony to the chimney-corner, shivering, and shrinking to make herself as small as she could, and to protect her poor half-naked limbs. Her mistress raised her arm.

“ I beg your pardon, ma’am,” said the man, “ but just

now I saw something fall out of the little girl's pocket and roll away. It may be that." At the same time he stooped, and appeared to be searching, for a moment. "Yes, here it is," he continued, as he rose and held out a coin to the landlady.

"Yes, that's it," she said.

It was not the real coin. It was a twenty-sous piece; but she profited by the transaction. She put it into her pocket, and confined herself to giving the child a stern glance, saying, "That had better not happen again."

Cosette returned to what her mistress called "her kennel;" and her large eyes, fixed on the strange traveller, began to assume an expression they had never had before. It was no longer simple astonishment; a sort of stupefied confidence was mingled with it.

"Do you want any supper?" the landlady asked the traveller.

He did not reply, but seemed lost in thought.

"Who can this man be?" she muttered to herself; "he is some wretched beggar who has not a penny to pay for his supper. Will he be able to pay for his room? It is lucky, after all, that he did not think of stealing the money that was on the floor."

At this moment a door opened, and Eponine and Azelma came in.

They were really two pretty little girls, rather tradesmen's daughters than peasants, and very charming,—one with shining auburn tresses, the other with long black plaits hanging down her back; both were alert, clean, plump, rosy, and a pleasure to look at. They were warmly clothed, but with such maternal art that the thickness of the stuff did not detract from the coquetry of the style; winter was foreseen, but spring was not effaced. In their dress, their gayety, and the noise which they made, there was a certain queenliness. When they came in, their mother said to them in a scolding voice, which was full of adoration, "There you are, then!"

Then, drawing them to her knees in turn, smoothing their hair, retying their ribbons, and letting them go with that gentle shake peculiar to mothers, she exclaimed, "What frights they are!"

They sat down by the fireside with a doll, which they turned over and over on their knees with all sorts of joyous prattle. From time to time Cosette raised her eyes from her knitting, and mournfully watched their play.

Eponine and Azelma did not look at Cosette, for to them she was no more than the dog. These three little girls did not count four-and-twenty years between them, and already represented human society,—on one side, envy; on the other, scorn.

The doll was very old, very faded and broken, but it seemed none the less wonderful to Cosette, who had never in her life possessed a doll, a "real doll," to employ an expression which all children will understand.

All at once the landlady, who was moving about the room, noticed that Cosette was idling, and watching the children instead of working.

"Ah, I have caught you!" she exclaimed; "that's the way you work, is it? I'll make you work to the music of the cat-o'-nine-tails!"

The stranger, without leaving his chair, turned to Madame Thénardier.

"Oh, ma'am," he said, with an almost timid smile, "let her play!"

Such a wish would have been a command from any traveller who had ordered a good supper and drunk a couple of bottles of wine, and who did not look like a beggar; but the landlady could not tolerate that a man who had such a hat should have a desire, and that one who wore such a coat should dare to have a will of his own. She answered sharply:—

"She must work, since she eats; I don't feed her to do nothing."

"What is she doing, pray?" continued the stranger, in

that gentle voice which formed such a strange contrast with his beggarly clothes and porter's shoulders.

The landlady deigned to reply:—

“ She is knitting stockings, if you please, for my little girls, who have none, so to speak, and are forced to go about barefooted.”

The man looked at Cosette's poor red feet, and said:

“ When will she have finished that pair of stockings?”

“ She has three or four good days' work, the idle slut.”

“ And how much may such a pair be worth when finished?”

The landlady gave him a contemptuous glance.

“ At least thirty sous.”

“ Will you sell them to me for five francs?” continued the man.

“ By Jove!” exclaimed a carrier who was listening, with a coarse laugh; “ I should think so,—five balls!”¹

Thénardier thought it his duty to speak.

“ Yes, sir; if such be your fancy, you may have the pair of stockings for five francs. We cannot refuse travellers anything.”

“ Cash down,” the landlady said in her peremptory voice.

“ I will buy the pair of stockings,” said the man, and added, as he drew a five-franc piece from his pocket and laid it on the table, “ I pay for them.”

Then he turned to Cosette:—

“ Your labour is now mine, so play, my child.”

The carrier was so affected by the five-franc piece that he left his glass and hurried up.

“ It is real!” he exclaimed, after examining it,—“ a true cart-wheel, and no mistake!”

Thénardier came up, and silently put the coin in his pocket.

The landlady could make no answer, but she bit her lip, and her face assumed an expression of hatred.

Cosette was trembling, but still ventured to ask:—

¹ *Ball*,—slang term for a franc.

"Is it true, ma'am? May I play?"

"Play," said her mistress, in a terrible voice.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Cosette.

And while her lips thanked the landlady, all her little soul thanked the traveller.

Thénardier had returned to his glass, and his wife whispered in his ear:—

"Who can this yellow man be?"

"I have seen," replied Thénardier, with a sovereign air, "millionaires who wore a coat like his."

Cosette had laid down her needles, but dared not leave her place; for, as a rule, she moved as little as possible. She took from a box behind her a few old rags, and her little leaden sword.

Eponine and Azelma paid no attention to what was going on, for they were carrying out a very important operation. They had seized the cat, thrown the doll on the ground, and Eponine, who was the elder, was wrapping up the kitten, in spite of its miaulings and writhings, in a quantity of old clothes and red and blue rags. While performing this serious and difficult task, she said to her sister in the sweet and adorable language of children, the grace of which, like the glistening of a butterfly's wings, disappears when you try to fix it:—

"This doll, sister, is more amusing than the other, you see, for it moves, cries, and is warm; so we will play with it. It is my little daughter, and I am a lady; I will call upon you, and you must look at her. By degrees you will see its whiskers, and that will surprise you; and then you will see its ears and its tail, and that will surprise you too, and you will say to me, 'Oh, my goodness!' and I shall answer, 'Yes, ma'am, it is my little child; little children are made like that just now.'"

Azelma listened to Eponine in admiration.

In the mean while the topers had begun to sing a vulgar song, at which they laughed till the ceiling shook, Thénardier encouraging and accompanying them.

As the birds make nests of everything, children make a doll of no matter what. While Eponine and Azelma were wrapping up the kitten, Cosette on her side had dressed out her sword. This done, she laid it on her arm, and sang softly to lull it to sleep.

A doll is one of the most imperious needs, and at the same time one of the most delicious instincts, of feminine childhood. To care for, clothe, adorn, dress, undress, dress again, teach, scold, rock, dandle, lull, send to sleep, and imagine that something is somebody,—the whole future of a woman is contained in this. While dreaming and prattling, making little outfits and tiny wardrobes, while sewing little frocks and aprons, the child becomes a girl, the girl becomes a maiden, and the maiden a woman. The first child is a continuation of the last doll.

A little girl without a doll is nearly as unhappy and quite as impossible as a wife without children.

Cosette, therefore, made a doll of her sword.

The landlady, in the mean while, walked up to the “yellow man.” “My husband is right,” she thought; “perhaps it is M. Lafitte. Some rich men are so whimsical.”

She leaned her elbows on the table and said, “Sir,—”

At the word “Sir” the man turned, for thus far she had only addressed him as “My good man.”

“You see, sir,” she continued, assuming an amiable air, which was even more dreadful than her fierce look, “I am glad to see the child play, and do not prevent it; and it is all right for once, as you are so generous. But, you see, she has nothing; she must work.”

“Then, she is not a child of yours?” asked the man.

“Oh, Lord! no, sir; she is a poor little girl we took in out of charity. She is a sort of imbecile, and I think has water on the brain, for she had a big head. We do all we can for her, but we are not rich; and though we write to her people, we have not had an answer for six months. It looks as if the mother were dead.”

“Ah!” said the man, and fell back into his revery.

"The mother couldn't have been much," the landlady added, "for she deserted her child."

During the whole of this conversation, Cosette, as if some instinct warned her that she was being talked about, did not take her eyes off her mistress. She listened, and heard two or three indistinct words here and there.

In the mean while, the drinkers, who were three parts intoxicated, struck up their unclean song again with redoubled gayety. It was a highly spiced, smutty ditty, in which the Virgin and Christ Child were introduced. Madame Thénardier went off to take part in the bursts of laughter. Cosette, under her table, looked at the fire, which was reflected in her fixed eyes; she had begun to rock her doll again, and, while lulling it to sleep, sang in a low voice, "My mother is dead, my mother is dead, my mother is dead."

On being again urged by the landlady, the yellow man the "millionaire," consented to take some supper.

"What will you have, sir?"

"Bread and cheese."

"He is certainly a beggar," thought the landlady.

The drunkards were still singing their song, and the child under the table still sang hers.

All at once Cosette broke off; she turned and saw the doll lying on the ground a few paces from the kitchen table, where the children had thrown it on taking up the kitten.

She dropped the wrapped-up sword, which only half satisfied her, and then slowly looked round the room. The landlady was whispering to her husband and reckoning some change. Eponine and Azelma were playing with the kitten; the guests were eating, drinking, or singing, and no one noticed her. She had not a moment to lose, so she crept on her hands and knees from under the table, assured herself once again that she was not watched, and seized the doll. A moment after, she was back in her seat, and so turned that the doll which she held in her arms should be in the shadow.

The happiness of playing with this doll was almost too much for her.

No one had seen her, except the traveller, who was slowly eating his poor supper.

This joy lasted nearly a quarter of an hour.

But, in spite of the precautions which Cosette took, she did not notice that one of the doll's feet stuck out, and that the fire lit it up very distinctly. This pink, luminous foot emerging from the shadow suddenly caught the eye of Azelma, who said to Eponine, "Look, sister."

The two little girls were stupefied. Cosette had dared to take their doll!

Eponine rose, and without releasing the cat, ran to her mother and plucked the skirt of her dress.

"Let me alone," said the mother; "what do you want now?"

"Mother," said the girl, "just look!"

And she pointed to Cosette.

Cosette, yielding entirely to the ecstasy of possession, saw and heard nothing more.

The landlady's face assumed that peculiar expression which is composed of the terrible blended with the trifles of life, and which has caused such women to be christened Megæras.

Now wounded pride exasperated her wrath; Cosette had over-leaped all bounds, and had laid violent hands on "the young ladies'" doll. A czarina who saw a moujik trying on her imperial son's blue ribbon would not wear a different face.

She cried, in a voice which indignation rendered hoarse:—
"Cosette!"

Cosette started as if the earth had trembled beneath her, and turned round.

"Cosette!" repeated her mistress.

Cosette gently laid the doll on the ground with a sort of veneration mingled with despair; then, without taking her eyes off it, she clasped her hands, and, frightful to relate

of a child of her age, wrung them ; then she burst into tears, a thing which none of the emotions of the day had caused,—neither the walk in the wood, the weight of the bucket, the loss of the coin, the sight of the lash, nor the harsh remarks of her mistress. She burst into loud sobs.

The traveller had risen from his chair. "What is the matter?" he asked the landlady.

"Don't you see?" she replied, pointing to the *corpus delicti* which lay at Cosette's feet.

"Well, what?" continued the man.

"That wretch," the landlady answered, "has had the audacity to touch my children's doll."

"So much noise about that!" said the man. "Well, suppose that she did play with the doll!"

"She touched it with her dirty hands," the landlady continued,—"her frightful hands."

Here Cosette redoubled her sobs.

"Will you be quiet?" her mistress yelled.

The man went straight to the street door, opened it, and walked out.

The landlady took advantage of his absence to give Cosette a hearty kick under the table, which made her scream.

The door opened again, and the man re-appeared, carrying in both hands the fabulous doll to which we have alluded, and at which all the village children had been staring ever since early morning. He placed it on its legs before Cosette, saying,—

"Here; this is for you."

We must suppose that, during the hour he had been sitting in a reverie, he had confusedly noticed the toyman's shop, which was so brilliantly lighted up with lamps and candles that it could be seen through the tap-room window like an illumination.

Cosette raised her eyes; she had looked at the man coming toward her with the doll, as if he were the sun. She heard the extraordinary words, "This is for you;" she looked at him, looked at the doll, then drew back slowly, and concealed

herself entirely at the farthest end, in a corner under the table.

She did not cry, she did not speak, but looked as if she dared hardly breathe.

The landlady, Eponine, and Azelma were so many statues; the topers themselves had stopped drinking, and there was a solemn silence in the tap-room.

The mother, petrified and dumb, began her conjectures again. "Who is this man? Is he poor or a millionaire? Perhaps he is both,—that is to say, a thief."

The husband's face wore that expressive wrinkle which marks the human face whenever the ruling instinct appears on it in all its bestial power. He looked in turn at the doll and at the traveller; he seemed to be sniffing round the man, as he would have done round a money-bag. This only lasted for a second; then he went up to his wife and whispered:—

"That machine cost at least thirty francs. No nonsense! Crawl in the dust before the man."

Coarse natures have this in common with simple natures, that they have no transitions.

"Well, Cosette," said the landlady, in a voice which strove to be sweet, and which was composed of the bitter honey of wicked women, "why don't you take your doll?"

Cosette ventured to crawl out of her hole.

"My little Cosette," her mistress continued, fawningly, "this gentleman gives you the doll, so take it, for it is yours."

Cosette gazed at the wonderful doll with a sort of terror; her face was still bathed in tears, but her eyes were beginning to fill, like the sky at dawn, with strange rays of joy. What she felt at this moment was something like what she would have felt had some one suddenly said to her, "Little girl, you are Queen of France."

It seemed to her that if she touched that doll, thunder would issue from it.

This was true up to a certain point, for she said to herself that her mistress would scold and beat her.

Still, the attraction gained the victory; she at length crawled up to the doll and murmured timidly, as she turned to the landlady:—

“ May I, ma’am? ”

No words can render her look, which was at once despairing, terrified, and ravished.

“ Of course,” said her mistress, “ since this gentleman gives it to you.”

“ Is it true, sir? ” Cosette continued, “ is the ‘ lady ’ really mine? ”

The stranger’s eyes were full of tears, and he seemed to have reached that point of emotion when a man does not speak, lest he should weep. He nodded to Cosette, and placed the “ lady’s ” little hand in hers.

Cosette quickly drew back her hand as if that of the “ lady ” burned her, and looked down at the brick floor. We are compelled to add that at this moment she put out her tongue to an enormous length; all at once she turned and passionately seized the doll.

“ I will call her Catherine,” she said.

It was a strange sight when Cosette’s rags met and clasped the doll’s rosy ribbons and fresh muslins.

“ May I put her in a chair, ma’am? ” she continued.

“ Yes, my child,” answered her mistress.

It was now the turn of Eponine and Azelma to look enviously at Cosette.

She placed Catherine in a chair and then sat down on the ground before her, motionless, without saying a word, and in a contemplative attitude.

“ Play, Cosette,” said the stranger.

“ Oh, I am playing,” the child answered.

This unknown man, this stranger, who had the air of a visitor sent by Providence to Cosette, was at that moment the person whom Madame Thénardier hated most in the world; still, she must put a constraint on herself. This emotion was

more than she could endure, accustomed to dissimulation though she was by her efforts to copy her husband in all his actions. She hastened to send her children to bed, and then asked the yellow man's "*leave*" to send off Cosette, "who had worked hard all day," she added with a maternal air. Cosette went off to bed, carrying Catherine in her arms.

The landlady went from time to time to the other end of the room, where her husband sat, to relieve her mind, she said. She exchanged with him a few sentences, which were the more furious because she dared not utter them aloud.

"Old ass! What has he got in his noddle to come and disturb us in this way! To want that little monster to play! to give her dolls!—dolls worth forty francs, to a wretch whom I would gladly sell for forty sous! A little more, and he would call her Your Majesty, like the Duchess de Berry. Can he be in his senses? The mysterious old fellow must be cracked."

"Why so? It is very simple," Thénardier replied. "Suppose it amuses him? It amuses you that the little one should work; it amuses him to see her play. He has a right; for a traveller can do as he likes so long as he pays. If this old man is a philanthropist, what is that to you? If he is an ass, it is no business of yours. Why do you interfere, so long as he has money?"

This was the language of a master, and the reasoning of a landlord, neither of which admitted of a reply.

The man was resting his elbow on the table, and had resumed his thoughtful attitude; the other travellers, pedlers, and carriers had gone away or left off singing. Those who remained regarded him from a distance with a sort of respectful fear; this poorly clad individual, who drew "cart-wheels" from his pocket with such ease, and lavished gigantic dolls on ragged girls, was assuredly a magnificent and formidable fellow.

Several hours passed; midnight mass was over, the chimes had ceased ringing, the drinkers had gone away, the pot-house was closed, the fire was out in the tap-room, but the stranger

still remained in the same spot and in the same posture. From time to time he changed the elbow on which he was leaning, that was all; but he had not uttered a syllable since Cosette went off to bed.

The Thénardiers alone remained in the room, out of politeness and curiosity.

"Is he going to pass the night like that?" the landlady growled. When the clock struck two, she declared herself conquered, and said to her husband, "I am off to bed; you can do as you like." The husband sat down at a table in a corner, lit a candle, and began reading the "*Courrier Français*."

A good hour passed, during which the worthy host read the paper through thrice from the date to the printer's name, but the stranger did not stir.

Thénardier moved, coughed, spat, and made his chair creak, but the man made no movement. "Can he be asleep?" Thénardier thought.—The man was not asleep, but no movement aroused him.

At length the landlord doffed his cap, approached him gently, and ventured to say:—

"Do you not wish for repose, sir?"

"To go to bed" would have appeared to him excessive and familiar, while "repose" hinted at luxury, and was respectful. Such words have the mysterious and admirable quality of swelling the bill on the next morning. A room in which you *sleep* costs twenty sous; one in which you *repose* costs twenty francs.

"Why, you are right," said the stranger; "where is your stable?"

"I will show you the way, sir," Thénardier replied, with a smile.

He took the candle; the man fetched his stick and bundle, and Thénardier led him to a room on the first floor, which was most luxurious, with its mahogany furniture, and the bed with its red cotton curtains.

"What is this?" the traveller asked.

"Our own bridal-chamber," the landlord replied; "my wife and I occupy another, and this room is only entered three or four times a year."

"I should have preferred the stable," the man said roughly.

Thénardier pretended not to hear this disagreeable remark.

He lit two new wax candles standing on the mantelpiece. A large fire was flashing in the grate.

Upon the mantelpiece was a woman's head-dress, made of silver tissue and orange flowers, under a glass shade.

"And what is this?" the stranger continued.

"That, sir," said Thénardier, "is my wife's wedding bonnet."

The traveller looked at the object in a way that seemed to say, "Then there was a moment when that monster was a maiden."

Thénardier lied; when he hired the house to convert it into a tavern, he found this room thus furnished, and bought the lot, thinking that it would cast a graceful shadow over his "spouse," and that his house would derive from it what the English call respectability.

When the traveller turned round, Thénardier had disappeared, without saying good-evening, as he did not wish to treat with disrespectful cordiality a man whom he intended to fleece royally next morning.

The landlord went to his room, where his wife was in bed, but not asleep. So soon as she heard her husband's footstep, she said to him:—

"You know that I mean to turn Cosette out to-morrow?"

Thénardier coldly answered:—

"How you go on!"

They exchanged no more words, and a few minutes later the candle was extinguished.

For his part, the stranger had placed his stick and bundle in a corner. When the landlord had withdrawn, he sat down in an easy-chair and remained lost in thought for a time; then he took off his shoes, seized one of the candles, blew out the other, opened the door, and left the room, look-

ing about him as if in search of something. He went along a passage and reached the staircase; here he heard a very gentle sound, like the breathing of a child. He followed this sound, and reached a triangular closet built under the stairs, or, to speak more correctly, formed by the stairs themselves. Here, among old hampers and potsherds, in dust and cobwebs, there was a bed, if we may apply the term to a straw mattress, so rotten as to show the straw, and a blanket so torn as to show the mattress. There were no sheets, and all this lay on the ground.

In this bed Cosette was sleeping.

The man approached and gazed at her.

Cosette was fast asleep and fully dressed; in winter she did not take off her clothes, that she might be a little warmer.

She was holding to her bosom the doll, whose large open eyes glistened in the darkness; from time to time she gave a heavy sigh, as if about to awake, and pressed the doll almost convulsively in her arms. There was nothing by her bedside but one of her wooden shoes.

Through an open door, close by, a large dark room could be seen. The stranger entered. At the end, two little white beds were visible through a glass door. They belonged to Eponine and Azelma. Behind these beds a curtainless wicker cradle was half hidden, in which slept the little boy who had been crying all the evening.

The stranger conjectured that this room communicated with that of the Thénardiers. He was about to retreat when his eye fell on the chimney,—one of those vast inn chimneys in which there is always a little fire when there is any fire at all, and which are so cold to look at. In this chimney there was no fire, not even ashes; but what there was in it attracted the traveller's attention. He saw two little shoes of coquettish shape and unequal size; and the traveller recollect ed the graceful and immemorial custom of children who place their shoes in the chimney on Christmas night, in order to obtain some glittering present from their good fairy in

the darkness. Eponine and Azelma had not failed in this observance, and each of them had set a shoe upon the hearth.

The traveller bent down.

The fairy,—that is, the mother,—had already paid her visit; and in each shoe was a brand-new shining ten-sous piece.

The man rose and was going away, when he observed another object in the darkest corner of the hearth; he looked at it, and recognized a hideous wooden shoe, half broken and covered with ashes and dried mud. It was Cosette's. With the touching confidence of children, who may be disappointed but are never discouraged, she had also placed her shoe in the chimney.

Hope in a child that has never known aught but despair, is a sublime and affecting thing.

There was nothing in this shoe.

The stranger felt in his pocket, and laid a gold coin in it. Then he crept noiselessly back to his bedroom.

CHAPTER IX

THÉNARDIER AT WORK

NEXT morning, two hours at least before daybreak, Thénardier sat, pen in hand, at a table in the tap-room, making out the bill of the yellow-coated traveller.

His wife, standing behind him, watched him; they did not exchange a syllable. On one side there was profound meditation, on the other that devout admiration with which one watches the birth and development of a marvel of the human mind. A noise was heard in the house; it was the Lark sweeping the stairs.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, and after some erasures, Thénardier produced this masterpiece:—

THE GENT IN NO. 1.

Supper	3 frcs.
Bed	10 "
Candles	5 "
Fire	4 "
Attendance	1 "
<hr/>	
Total	23 frcs.

"Twenty-three francs!" exclaimed the wife, with admiration mingled with some hesitation.

Like all great artists, Thénardier was not satisfied, and said, "Pooh!"

It was the accent of Castlereagh drawing up the little bill for France to pay at the Congress of Vienna.

"Thénardier, you are right; he certainly owes it," muttered the wife, thinking of the doll given to Cosette in the presence of her children. "It is fair, but it is too much; he will not pay it."

Thénardier gave a cold laugh, and said, "He will pay it."

This laugh was the supreme assertion of assurance and authority; what was said in this way must needs be so. The wife made no objection, but began to arrange the tables, while her husband walked up and down the room; a moment after he added:—

"Why, I owe fifteen hundred francs."

He sat down in the ingle-nook, meditating, with his feet in the warm ashes.

"By the bye," the wife continued, "you don't forget that I mean to fling Cosette out to-day? The monster! she breaks my heart with her doll. I would sooner marry Louis XVIII. than keep her a day longer in the house."

Thénardier lit his pipe, and said between two puffs: "You will hand the man the bill."

Then he went out.

He had scarcely left the room when the traveller entered.

Thénardier at once reappeared behind him and stood motionless in the half-open door, visible only to his wife.

The yellow man carried his stick and bundle in his hand.

"Up so soon?" the landlady said. "Are you going to leave us already, sir?"

As she said this, she twisted the bill in her hands with an embarrassed air, and made creases in it with her nails; her harsh face wore an unusual look of timidity and scruple.

It seemed to her difficult to present such a bill to a man who looked so thoroughly poor.

The traveller seemed absent and preoccupied as he replied:—

"Yes, madame, I am going."

"Then you have no business to transact in Montfermeil, sir?" she continued.

"No; I am merely passing through, that is all. What do I owe you, madame?"

The landlady, without replying, handed him the folded paper; he opened and looked at it, but his attention was evidently elsewhere.

"Do you do a good business here?" he asked.

"Tolerably good, sir," the landlady answered, stupefied at not seeing another sort of explosion; then she went on in a dreary, mournful tone:—

"Oh, sir, times are very bad! And then there are so few respectable people in these parts; all the people are poor, you see. If we did not have now and then some generous, rich traveller like yourself, sir, we could never get along, we have so many expenses. Why, that little girl costs us the very eyes out of our head."

"What little girl?"

"Why, you know,—Cosette; the Lark, as they call her hereabout."

"Oh!" said the man.

She continued:—

"What asses these peasants are with their nicknames! She looks more like a bat than a lark. You see, sir, we don't ask for charity, but we can't give it; we earn nothing, and our expenses are great,—the license, the taxes, and so

on! You know, sir, that the government takes a terrible deal of money. And then I have my own daughters, and do not care to support another person's child."

The man replied, in a voice which he strove to render indifferent, and in which there was a tremor:—

"And suppose you were rid of her?"

"Of whom? — of Cosette?" The landlady's red and violent face was illumined by a hideous grin. "Ah, sir, my good sir, take her, keep her, carry her off, sugar her, stuff her with truffles, eat her, drink her, and may all the saints in paradise bless you."

"Agreed."

"Really! Will you take her?"

"I will take her."

"Now?"

"At once; call her."

"Cosette," shouted the landlady.

"In the mean while," continued the man, "I will pay my score; how much is it?"

He took a glance at the bill, and could not restrain a start of surprise.

"Twenty-three francs!"

He looked at the landlady and repeated, "Twenty-three francs?"

There was in his pronunciation of the two words an accent between an exclamation and a question.

Madame Thénardier had had time to prepare for the shock, and answered boldly:—

"Yes, sir, twenty-three francs."

The stranger laid five five-franc pieces on the table.

"Go and fetch the girl," he said.

At this moment Thénardier walked into the middle of the room, and said:—

"The gentleman owes twenty-six sous."

"Twenty-six sous!" exclaimed the wife.

"Twenty sous for the bedroom," Thénardier continued coldly, "and six for the supper. As for the girl, I

must talk a little with the gentleman first. Leave us, wife."

The landlady was dazzled by this unexpected flash of genius; she felt that a great actor had come upon the stage, made no answer, and went out.

So soon as they were alone Thénardier offered the traveller a chair; he sat down. Thénardier remained standing, and his face assumed a singular expression of kindness and simplicity.

"I must tell you," he said, "sir, that I adore that child."

The stranger looked at him intently.

"What child?"

Thénardier continued:—

"How strange it is; you grow attached to such little creatures. What is the meaning of all that money? Put it back in your pocket; I adore the child."

"What child?" the stranger asked.

"Why, our little Cosette! Don't you wish to take her from us? Well, I speak frankly; and as true as you are an honest man, I cannot consent. I should miss the child, for I have known her since she was a baby; it is true that she costs us money, that she has her faults, that we are not rich, and that I paid out more than four hundred francs for medicines alone in one of her illnesses. But one must do something for God. She has neither father nor mother, and I brought her up; I have bread both for her and for me. Look you, I am fond of the child; affection grows upon one. I am a foolish fellow, and don't reason; I love the girl; and though my wife is quick, she loves her too. She is like our own child, and I want to hear her prattle in the house."

The stranger still looked at him intently, as he continued:—

"Excuse me, sir, but a child can't be given like that to the first passer-by. You will allow that I am right. Still, I don't say — You are rich, and look like a very worthy man, and it may be for her welfare; but I am bound to know. You understand? Supposing that I were to let her go and to sac-

rifice myself, I should like to know where she is going, and not to lose sight of her; I should wish to know where she is, and to go and see her now and then, to convince the child that her good foster-father is alive and is watching over her. In short, there are some things which are not possible; I don't even know your name. I ought at least to see some scrap of paper, a passport, and so on."

The stranger, without ceasing to fix on him that look which pierces to the bottom of the conscience, said in a grave, firm voice:—

" **Monsieur Thénardier**, a man does not require a passport to travel five leagues from Paris; if I take Cosette away, I take her away,—that is all. You will not know my name, my residence, or where she is; and it is my intention that she shall never see you again. I break the tie that binds her, and away she flies. Does that suit you? Yes or no?"

As demons and genii recognize by certain signs the presence of a superior deity, so Thénardier understood that he had to deal with a very strong man. It was a sort of intuition, and he comprehended it with his clear and sagacious promptitude. On the previous evening, while drinking, smoking, and singing, he had constantly looked at the stranger, watching him like a cat, and studying him like a mathematician. He had watched him both on his own account, for the pleasure of it, and through instinct, and had played the spy on him as if paid to do so. Not a gesture or movement of the yellow-coated man escaped him, and even before the stranger so clearly manifested his interest in Cosette, Thénardier divined it. He surprised the old man's profound glances, which constantly reverted to the child. Why this interest? Who was this man? Why was his attire so wretched, when his purse was so full. These questions he asked himself, and could not answer them, and they irritated him; he pondered them the whole night. He could not be Cosette's father; was he her grandfather? Then why did he not make himself known at once? When a man has a claim, he proves it; and this man evidently had no claim on

Cosette. In that case, what was it? Thénardier lost himself in suppositions; he caught a glimpse of everything, and saw nothing. However this might be, on beginning the conversation, feeling sure that there was a secret in all this, and that the man had some interest in remaining in the shadow, he felt himself strong; but when he heard the stranger's firm and distinct retort, he saw that this mysterious person was mysterious in a very simple way, and felt his own weakness. He had not expected anything of this sort, and it routed his conjectures. He rallied his ideas, and weighed everything in a second. Thénardier was one of those men who judge a situation at a glance, and he considered that the moment had come to proceed straight forward and rapidly. He behaved as great captains do at that decisive instant which they alone can recognize; he suddenly unmasked his battery.

"Sir," he said, "I want fifteen hundred francs."

The stranger drew from his side-pocket an old black leather pocket-book, opened it, and took from it three banknotes, which he laid on the table; then he placed his broad thumb on the notes, and said to the landlord:—

"Bring Cosette here."

While this was taking place, what was Cosette about?

On waking, she ran to her shoe and found the gold coin in it; it was not a napoleon, but one of those new twenty-franc pieces of the Restoration, on which the Prussian queue was substituted for the crown of laurels. Cosette was dazzled, and her destiny began to intoxicate her; she knew not what a gold piece was,—she had never seen one,—and she hurriedly hid it in her pocket, as if she had stolen it. She felt it was really hers; she guessed whence the gift came, but she experienced a feeling of joy full of fear. She was happy, but she was stupefied; these magnificent things did not seem to her real,—the doll frightened her, the gold coin frightened her, and she trembled vaguely at this magnificence. The stranger alone did not frighten her; on the contrary, he reassured her. Ever since the previous evening, through

all her amazement and in her sleep, she thought in her little childish mind of that man, who looked so old and poor and sad, and who was so rich and good. Everything had changed for her since she met him in the wood. Cosette, less happy than the most insignificant swallow, had never known what it was to take refuge in the shadow and beneath the wing of her mother; for five years,—that is to say, so far back as her memory reached,—the poor child had trembled and shuddered. She had always been exposed naked to the sharp blasts of misfortune; now she felt as if she were clothed. Formerly her soul was cold, now it was warm. Cosette no longer feared her mistress, for she was no longer alone; she had some one by her side.

She set about her daily work very quickly; and the gold piece, which she had in the same pocket from which the fifteen-sous piece fell on the previous night, caused her thoughts to stray. She did not dare to touch it, but she looked at it for five minutes at a time, with her tongue stuck out, if the truth must be told. While sweeping the stairs she stood motionless, forgetting her broom and the whole world, engaged in watching this star sparkle in her pocket.

It was during one of these periods of contemplation that her mistress came to her.

By her husband's order she had come to fetch the child, and, strange to say, did not strike her, or even abuse her.

"Cosette," she said, almost gently, "come directly."

A moment later Cosette entered the tap-room.

The stranger took his bundle and untied it; it contained a little woollen gown, an apron, a stuff bodice, a petticoat, a kerchief, woollen stockings, shoes,—a complete outfit for a child of seven years of age. All these things were black.

"My dear," said the man, "take these and go and dress yourself quickly."

Day was breaking when those inhabitants of Montfermeil who had begun to open their doors saw a poorly clad man and a girl holding a large pink doll going along the Paris road toward Livry.

It was the man of our story and Cosette.

No one knew the man, and few recognized Cosette in her new dress.

Cosette was going away. With whom? She knew not. Where? She did not know. All she understood was that she was leaving Thénardier's pot-house behind her; no one thought of saying good-by to her, or she to any one. She left the house, hated and hating.

Poor, gentle being, whose heart up to this hour had only been suppressed!

Cosette walked along gravely, opening her eyes wide, and looking at the sky; she had placed her gold in the pocket of her new apron, and from time to time stooped down and looked at it, and then at her companion. She felt something as if she were close beside the good God.

CHAPTER X

HE WHO SEEKS TO BETTER HIMSELF MAY FIND HIMSELF
WORSE OFF

MADAME THENARDIER, according to her habit, had left her husband to act, and anticipated grand results. When the man and Cosette had gone, Thénardier let a good quarter of an hour elapse, then took her on one side, and showed her the fifteen hundred francs.

“Is that all?” she said.

It was the first time since her marriage that she had ventured to criticise an act of her master.

The blow went home.

“You are right,” he said, “and I am an ass. Give me my hat.”

He thrust the three notes into his pocket and went out in hot haste; but he made a mistake, and turned to the right

first. Some neighbours of whom he inquired put him on the track again ; the Lark and the man had been seen going in the direction of Livry. He followed this suggestion, walking along at a great rate, and soliloquizing :

“ The man is evidently a millionaire dressed in yellow, and I am a donkey. First he gave twenty sous, then five francs, then fifty francs, then fifteen hundred francs, and all with the same facility. He would have given fifteen thousand francs ! but I shall catch him up.”

And then, that bundle of clothes prepared beforehand for the child ; that was singular, and there was some mystery behind it. Now, mysteries must not be let go when you hold them ; for the secrets of the rich are sponges full of gold, if you know how to squeeze them. All these thoughts whirled through his brain. “ I am a donkey ! ” he said.

On leaving Montfermeil and reaching the turn which the Lagny road takes, you can see it running a long distance before you across the plain. On getting to this point he calculated that he should see the man and child, and looked as far as his eye could reach, but saw nothing. He inquired again, but he had lost considerable time. Some passers-by told him that the people he was looking for had gone in the direction of the Gagny wood. He hastened in that direction.

They were far in advance of him ; but a child walks slowly, and he went fast. Then, again, the country was familiar to him.

All at once he stopped and smote his forehead, like a man who has forgotten some essential thing, and is ready to retrace his steps.

“ I ought to have brought my gun,” he said to himself.

Thénardier was one of those double natures which sometimes exist among us without our knowledge, and disappear unknown, because destiny has only shown us one side of them ; it is the fate of many men to live thus half submerged. In an ordinary situation Thénardier had everything necessary to make him,— we do not say to be,— what

is conventionally termed an honest tradesman, or a worthy citizen. At the same time, certain circumstances being given, certain shocks stirring up his nature from the bottom, he had every requisite to make him a villain. He was a shop-keeper in whom there was a monster. Satan must have sometimes crouched in a corner of the lair in which Thénardier lived, and have dreamed before this hideous masterpiece.

After a moment's hesitation he thought:—

“Nonsense! they would have time to escape.” And he continued his walk, going rapidly ahead, almost with an air of certainty, displaying the sagacity of a fox that scents a covey of partridges.

In fact, when he had passed the ponds and cut across the great clearing to the right of the Avenue de Bellevue till he reached the wide turfed glade which covers the old aqueduct of the Abbey de Chelles, he noticed over a shrub a hat, upon which he had already built up many conjectures; it was that man's hat. The shrub was low, and Thénardier saw that the man and Cosette were sitting under it. The child could not be seen, but the doll's head was visible.

Thénardier was not mistaken; the man had sat down there to let the child rest a little. The tavern-keeper dodged round the shrub and suddenly appeared before those whom he was seeking.

“Excuse me sir,” he said, panting, “but here are your fifteen hundred francs.” So saying, he handed the stranger the three bank-bills.

The man raised his eyes.

“What is the meaning of this?”

Thénardier answered respectfully:—

“It means, sir, that I am going to take Cosette back.”

The child shuddered, and pressed close to the man.

The latter answered, looking fixedly at Thénardier, and leaving a space between each word:—

“You — take — Cosette — back?”

“Yes, sir; I will tell you. I have reflected. The truth

is, that I have no right to give her to you. Look you, I am an honest man. The little one does not belong to me, but to her mother, who intrusted her to me; and I can only give her back to her mother. You will say: ‘Her mother is dead.’ Good. In that case I can only surrender Cosette to a person who brings me a written order signed by her mother. That is clear enough.”

The man, without answering, felt in his pocket, and Thénardier saw the pocket-book with the bank-notes re-appear.

He gave a start of joy.

“Good,” he thought; “I have him! He is going to bribe me.”

Before opening the pocket-book, the traveller looked around him. The place was utterly deserted; there was not a soul in the wood or in the valley. The man opened his pocket-book and took out, not the handful of bank-notes which Thénardier anticipated, but a simple sheet of paper, which he unfolded and handed to the landlord, saying:—

“ You are right; read.”

Thénardier took the paper and read:—

M. SUR M., March 25, 1823.

MONSIEUR THÉNARDIER,— You will hand over Cosette to the bearer, who will pay up all little matters.

I have the honour to remain,
Yours,

FANTINE.

“ Do you know the signature?” the man continued.

It was really Fantine’s signature; Thénardier recognized it, and had no reply. He felt a double annoyance,— first, at having to renounce the bribe which he expected, and, second, at being beaten. The man added:—

“ You can keep that paper as your receipt.”

Thénardier retreated in good order.

“ The signature is tolerably well imitated,” he growled.
“ Well, be it so.”

Then he made a desperate effort.

“ So far, so good, sir, since you are the bearer; but my

expenses must be paid. There is a heavy sum owing me."

The man rose, and said as he dusted his threadbare cuff:—

" Monsieur Thénardier, in January, the mother calculated that she owed you one hundred and twenty francs; in February, you sent in an account of five hundred francs. You received three hundred at the end of that month, and three hundred more early in March. Since then, nine months have elapsed, at fifteen francs, the price agreed on, which makes one hundred and thirty-five francs. You had received one hundred francs too much, so this leaves thirty-five still owing you. I have just given you fifteen hundred."

Thénardier felt like a wolf caught by the leg in a steel trap.

" Who is this devil of a man? " he thought.

He behaved like the wolf; he shook himself; impudence had carried him through before now.

" Mr. What's-your-name," he said boldly, and putting off his respectful manner, " if you do not give me three thousand francs, I shall take Cosette back."

The stranger said quietly:—

" Come, Cosette."

He took the child by his left hand, and with the right he picked up his stick.

Thénardier noticed the enormous size of the stick and the solitude of the spot; the man plunged into the wood with the child, leaving the landlord motionless and confounded.

As they walked away, Thénardier studied the man's broad shoulders and enormous fists. Then his eyes, returning to himself, fell upon his puny arms and thin hands.

" I must have been a fool," he said, " not to bring my gun, as I was going hunting."

Still the tavern-keeper did not give in.

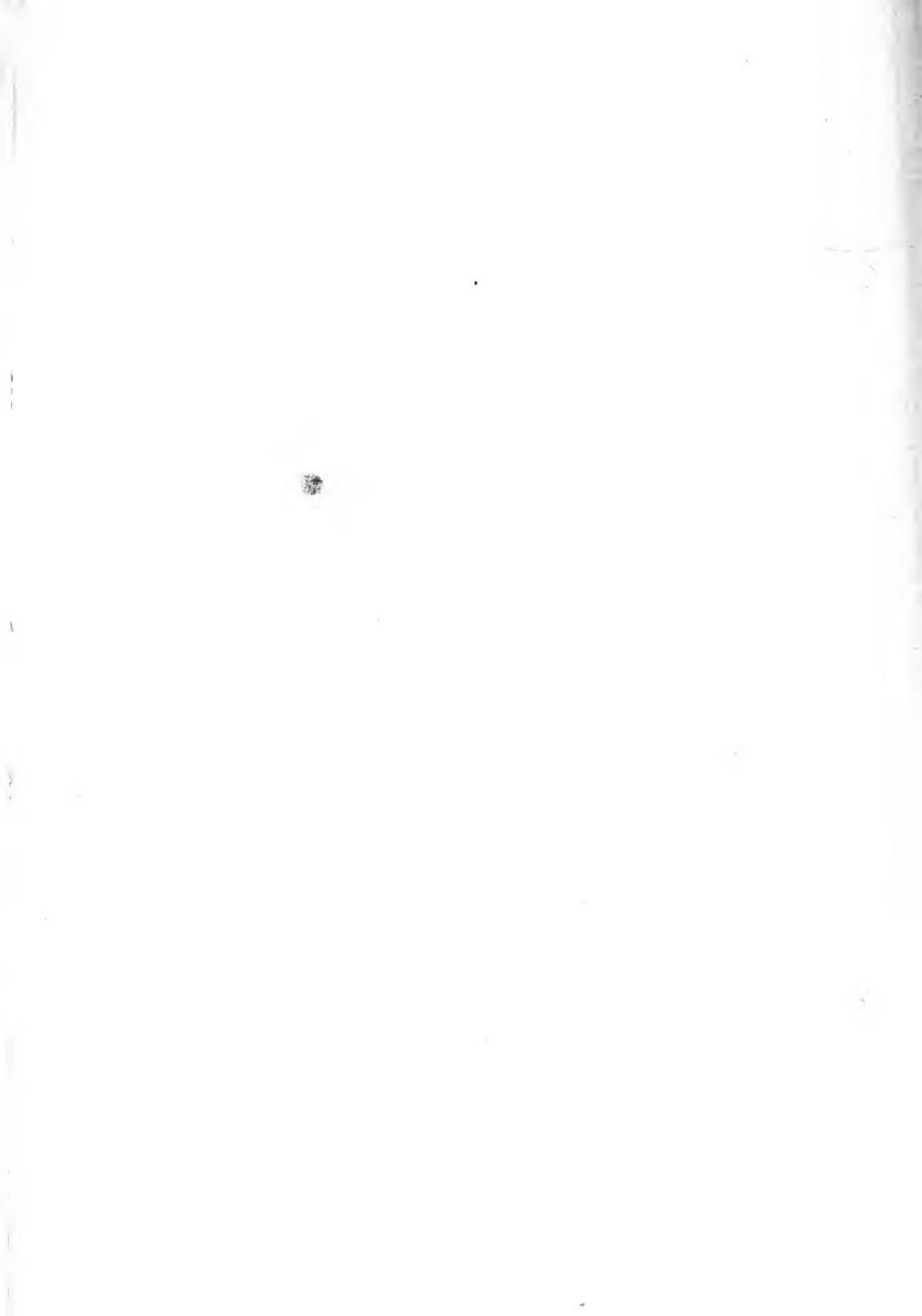
" I must know where he goes," he said, and he followed them at a distance. Two things remained in his hands,—irony, in the shape of the scrap of paper signed " Fantine," and a consolation in the shape of fifteen hundred francs.

The man led Cosette in the direction of Bondy; he walked



"Thénardier followed him; but,—the man turned and looked at him so menacingly, that the landlord thought it useless to go any further."

Les Misérables. Cosette: Page 141.



slowly, with drooping head, and in a sad, pensive attitude. Winter had thinned the wood, and hence Thénardier did not lose sight of them, although he kept some distance off. From time to time the man turned to see whether he was followed, and suddenly perceived Thénardier. He drew Cosette into a clump of trees, in which they both disappeared. "Confound him!" said Thénardier, as he doubled his pace.

The closeness of the trees compelled him to draw nearer to them; and when the man was at the thickest part of the wood he turned and saw Thénardier, although the latter tried to conceal himself in the branches. The man gave him an uneasy glance, then tossed his head and continued his walk. Thénardier followed him; but, after going some two hundred yards, the man turned and looked at him so menacingly that the landlord thought it "useless" to go any further, and turned back.

CHAPTER XI

NUMBER 9,430 TURNS UP AGAIN, AND COSETTE WINS IT IN THE LOTTERY

J EAN VALJEAN was not dead. When he fell, or rather, threw himself into the sea, he was, as we have seen, without irons. He swam under water to a ship at anchor, to which a boat was moored. He found means to conceal himself in this boat till night, when he again took to swimming, and reached the shore not far from Cape Brun. There, as he had money, he procured clothing; a pot-house near Balaguier then served as dressing-room to escaped convicts,—a lucrative trade. Next Jean Valjean, like all those poor fugitives who seek to evade the law and social fatality, followed a dark and winding road. He first found an asylum at Pradeaux, near Beausset; then he turned toward

Grand Villard near Briançon, in the Upper Alps,—an uneasy, anxious flight; the path of a mole, whose branchings are innumerable. Later on, traces of his passage were found near Ain, in the district of Cevrieux, in the Pyrenees, at Acon, at a spot called Grange-le-Doumecq, near Chavailles, and in the vicinity of Perigueux at Bruines, in the district of Chapelle Gonaguet. He reached Paris; we have just seen him at Montfermeil. His first care, on reaching Paris, was to buy mourning clothes for a little girl of seven or eight; then to procure himself a lodging. This done, he went to Montfermeil.

It may be remembered that after his preceding escape, or about that time, he made a mysterious journey, of which justice caught a glimpse.

Moreover, he was thought dead, and this deepened the darkness around him. He came across a newspaper announcing the fact, and felt reassured and almost as much at peace as if he were really dead.

On the evening of the day when Jean Valjean rescued Cosette from the claws of the Thénardiers, he re-entered Paris. It was nightfall as he passed the Barrière Monceaux, where he took a cab to the esplanade of the Observatory. He left it there, paid the driver, took Cosette by the hand, and together they walked toward the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, through the black night, and the deserted streets adjoining the Ourcine and the Glacière.

The day had been strange and full of emotions for Cosette. They had eaten behind hedges, bread and cheese bought at isolated taverns; they had changed carriages often, and walked part of the road on foot. She did not complain, but she felt tired; and Jean Valjean perceived it by the fact that she dragged more and more on his hand as she walked. He took her on his back; and Cosette without letting go of Catherine, dropped her head on his shoulder and fell asleep.

BOOK IV

THE GORBEAU HOUSE

CHAPTER I

MASTER GORBEAU

FORTY years ago the solitary traveller who ventured into the unknown region of the Saltpetrière, and went up the boulevard as far as the Barrière d'Italie, reached a point where it might be said that Paris disappeared. It was not a solitude, for there were passers-by; it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a town, for the streets had ruts as deep as those in the high-roads, and grass grew in them; it was not a village, for the houses were too lofty. What was it, then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody, a deserted spot where there was somebody; it was a boulevard of the great city, a street of Paris, more wild at night than a forest, more gloomy by day than a cemetery.

It was the old quarter of the Marché aux Chevaux.

If he risked himself beyond the tottering walls of the market, if he even consented to pass the Rue du Petitbanquier, this venturesome traveller reached the corner of the Rue des Vignes St. Marcel,—an unfamiliar latitude; after leaving on his right a garden protected by high walls, he next reached a field in which stood tan-mills, resembling gigantic beaver-dams; next, an inclosure encumbered with planks, tree-stumps, sawdust, shavings, and chips, on the top of which a large

dog barked; then a long low wall, all in ruins, with a small, decrepit back gate, covered with moss, which burst into flower in spring; and lastly, in the most desolate spot, a hideous and decrepit building, on which was painted in large letters, "Post no Bills." Here, close to a foundery, and between two garden walls, stood, at the time of which we write, a poor house, which at the first glance seemed small as a cottage, but which was in reality large as a cathedral. The gable end was turned to the public thoroughfare, and hence its apparent smallness; nearly the whole house was concealed, and only a door and a window were visible.

This house was only one story high.

On examining it, the first fact that struck one was that the door could never have been other than that of a hovel, while the window, had it been carved in stone instead of being made of rubble, might have belonged to a mansion.

The door was nothing but a collection of worm-eaten planks, clumsily held together by roughly hewn cross-beams. It opened immediately on a steep staircase, muddy, dirty, and dusty, of the same width as itself, which could be seen from the street, running straight up, as steep as a ladder, and disappearing in the darkness between two walls. The top of the clumsy opening was masked by a thin deal plank, in which a triangular hole had been cut, serving both for purposes of observation and ventilation, when the door was shut. On the inside of the door, a brush dipped in ink had clumsily traced No. 52, while over the aperture the same brush had painted No. 50, so that one hesitated. Where was one? Above the door, it said, "At No. 50;" the inside answered, "No; at No. 52." Dust-colored rags hung like a drapery over the triangular opening.

The window was wide, tolerably lofty, filled with large panes of glass, and protected by Venetian blinds; but these panes had various wounds, at once concealed and betrayed by an ingenious paper bandage, and the Venetian blinds, broken and hanging from their hinges, threatened passers-by more than they protected the inhabitants. The horizontal

slats were wanting here and there, and had been artlessly replaced with boards nailed on perpendicularly; so that the affair began as a Venetian blind, and ended as a shutter.

This door, which had an unclean look, and this window, which looked honest, though dilapidated, produced the effect of two beggars, walking side by side, with different aspects under the same rags, the one having always been a mendicant, while the other had once been a gentleman.

The staircase led to a very large building, resembling a shed which had been converted into a house. This building had as its intestinal tube, a long passage, upon which opened, to right and left, compartments of various dimensions, habitable at a pinch, and more like stalls than cells. These rooms were lighted from the dreary waste ground in the neighbourhood.

The whole was dark, disagreeable, dull, melancholy, and sepulchral, and traversed, according as the cracks were in the roof or the door, by cold sunbeams or sharp draughts. An interesting and picturesque peculiarity of houses of this description is the enormous size of the spiders.

To the left of the door, on the boulevard, about six feet from the ground, a bricked-up window formed a square niche, filled by passing lads with stones.

A portion of this building has been recently demolished, but from what still remains an idea may be formed of what it was. The whole affair is not more than a century old; one hundred years are the youth of a church and the old age of a human abode. It seems as if the house of man shared his brief tenure, and the house of God his eternity.

The postman called this house No. 50-52, but it was known in the quarter as the Gorbeau House.

Let us explain whence this title came.

The collectors of petty details, who make anecdotal herbariums, and prick slippery dates into their memory with a pin, know there were in Paris, about the year 1770, two advocates at the Châtelet of the names of Corbeau and Renard [Crow and Fox],—two names foreseen by La Fontaine.

The opportunity was too good to be neglected by their brother lawyers, and ere long the following parody, in rather halting verse, was in everybody's mouth:—

Perched on a docket, Master Crow
Held in his beak a savoury writ;
Sir Fox, drawn by the odours wafted to and fro,
Addressed him thus, to wit:¹

The two honest practitioners, embarrassed by these witticisms and unable to hold up their heads under the outburst of laughter that followed, resolved to get rid of their names, and for that purpose appealed to the king. The petition was handed to Louis XV. on the very day when the Papal Nuncio, devoutly kneeling on one side, and Cardinal de la Roche Aymon on the other, were each drawing, in the presence of his Majesty, a slipper upon the bare feet of Madame du Barry, who had just left her bed. The king, who was laughing, continued to laugh, gayly passed from the two bishops to the two lawyers, and bestowed on those limbs of the law their former names, or nearly so. By royal authority, Master Corbeau was allowed to add a tail to his initial letter and become Gorbeau; but Master Renard was less fortunate,—he could only obtain leave to place a *p* before his *r* and call himself Prenard,² so that the latter name was nearly as significant as the first.

Now, according to local tradition, Master Gorbeau had been owner of the building numbered 50–52 on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, and was even the author of the grand window.

Hence the tenement was called Gorbeau House.

Opposite the house there stands, amid the boulevard trees, a great elm, which is nearly three parts dead; a little farther on is the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, which street at that time was without houses, unpaved, planted with sickly trees, green or slimy according to the season, and which

¹ Parody on La Fontaine's famous fable, "The Fox and the Crow."

² Seizer.

ran straight down to the city wall. A copperas smell issued in puffs from the roof of an adjacent manufactory.

The barrier was close by, and in 1823, the city wall was still in existence.

The barrier itself cast a gloom over the mind, for it was on the road to Bicêtre. Under the empire and the Restoration, men condemned to death re-entered Paris by that road on the day of their execution. Here was committed, about the year 1829, that mysterious assassination called "the murder of the Barrière de Fontainebleau,"—a frightful problem which has never been elucidated, a mournful enigma which has never been solved. A few steps farther on you come to the fatal Rue Croulebarbe, where Ulbach stabbed the goat girl of Ivry to the sound of thunder, as in a melodrama. A few steps more and you reach the abominable pollard-elms of the Barrière St. Jacques, that philanthropic expedient for concealing the scaffold, the paltry, disgraceful Place de Grève of a shopkeeping society, which shrank from the death penalty, neither daring to abolish it with grandeur nor to keep it up with authority.

Thirty-seven years ago, with the exception of this Place St. Jacques, which was, as it were, predestined, and has always been horrible, perhaps, the gloomiest point of all this gloomy boulevard was that which is still so unattractive,—the spot where No. 50-52 stood.

Trades-people did not begin to build there till five-and-twenty years later. The situation was unpleasant; for the morbid ideas which took possession of you there, reminded you that you stood between the Saltpetrière, whose dome was just visible, and Bicêtre, whose barrier you could touch,—that is to say, between male and female mania. As far as the eye could reach, nothing was visible save the slaughter-houses, the city wall, and the fronts of a few factories, resembling barracks or monasteries.

Everywhere were sheds and rubbish, old walls, black as coffins, new walls white as winding-sheets; everywhere parallel rows of trees, buildings standing in rows, flat structures, long

cold lines, and the gloomy sadness of right angles. There was not a diversity of the soil, not a single architectural caprice; the whole was freezing, regular, and hideous. Nothing is so oppressive as symmetry, because symmetry is boredom; and boredom is the basis of melancholy and yawning depair. It is possible to imagine a greater horror than an Inferno where people suffer; it is one where they are bored. If such an Inferno exist, this section of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital might well be the entrance to it.

Nevertheless, at nightfall, at the moment when day disappears, especially in winter, at the hour when the evening breeze tears from the elms their last rusty leaves, when the darkness is profound and starless, and when the moon and the wind make rents in the clouds, this boulevard becomes suddenly terrifying. The black outlines are lost in the gloom, and the passer-by cannot refrain from thinking of the countless traditions which connect the spot with the gallows. This solitude, in which so many crimes have been committed, has something awful about it; traps can almost be foreseen in the darkness; all the confused shapes of night appear suspicious; and the long hollow squares dimly seen between the trees seem graves. By day it is ugly, in the evening lugubrious, and at night sinister.

In the summer twilight a few old women might be seen sitting under the elms upon benches mouldy with rain; those worthy old ladies had a partiality for begging.

Even at the time of which we write, however, this quarter, which looked superannuated rather than ancient, was striving to transform itself; and anyone who wished to see it, was obliged to make haste, for every day some detail disappeared. For the last twenty years the Orleans railway station has stood beside the old faubourg, and has changed it; for wherever a station is built on the outskirts of a capital, it is the death of a suburb and the birth of a town. Round these centres of popular movement, at the rattle of those mighty machines, before the breath of those monstrous horses of civilization which devour coal and snort fire, the earth trem-

bles, and opens to swallow up the old abodes of men and bring forth new ones; old houses crumble away, and new ones rise in their place.

Since the Orleans railway station invaded the territory of the Salpêtrière, the narrow old streets that border the Jardin des Plantes shiver and shake, traversed as they are three or four times a day by those currents of diligences, hackney coaches, and omnibuses, which, within a given time, crowd back the houses on either side; for it is a curious, though a perfectly true fact that, just as in large capitals the sun makes the southern fronts of houses vegetate and grow, so the frequent passing of vehicles widens streets. Symptoms of new life are visible in the remotest corners of this old provincial district; pavement is being laid down, and is beginning to extend even to spots where there are as yet no wayfarers. One memorable morning in July, 1845, the tar-kettles were suddenly seen smoking there; and on that day it may be said that civilization reached the Rue de l'Oursine, and that Paris entered the Faubourg St. Marceau.

CHAPTER II

THE NEST OF AN OWL AND A LINNET

JEAN VALJEAN stopped in front of this Gorbeau House. Like the wild bird, he had selected a deserted spot in which to build his nest.

He felt in his waistcoat-pocket, took out a latch-key, opened and carefully shut the door again, and went upstairs, still carrying Cosette.

When he reached the landing, he took from his pocket another key, with which he opened another door. The room which he entered was a sort of spacious garret, furnished with a mattress laid on the floor, a table, and a few chairs.

In the corner there was a stove, in which a fire burned; and the street lamp faintly illumined this poor interior. At the end of the room was a closet with a poor bedstead, to which Jean Valjean carried the child and laid her on it, without awaking her.

He struck a match and lit a candle,— all this had been prepared beforehand on the table,— and he then began to gaze at Cosette with a look full of ecstasy, in which the expression of kindness and tenderness almost amounted to delirium. The little girl, with that calm confidence which belongs only to extreme strength and extreme weakness, had fallen asleep without knowing with whom she was, and continued to sleep without knowing where she was.

Jean Valjean bent down and kissed the child's hand.

Nine months before he had kissed the hand of her mother, who had also just fallen asleep.

The same painful, religious, poignant feeling filled his heart.

He knelt down by Cosette's bed.

Long after daybreak the child slept. A pale ray of the December sun filtered through the window and made long lines of light and shadow on the ceiling. Suddenly a heavily laden wagon, passing along the boulevard, shook the house like a clap of thunder, and made it tremble from top to bottom.

"Yes, ma'am," cried Cosette, waking with a start. "Here I am, here I am!" And she jumped out of bed, her eyes still half closed by the weight of sleep, and stretched her arms to a corner of the wall. "Oh, goodness, my broom!" she said. She opened her eyes wide, and saw Jean Valjean's smiling face. "Ah, so it is true," said the child. "Good-morning, sir."

Children accept joy and happiness at once and familiarly, for they are themselves by nature happiness and joy.

Cosette saw Catherine at the foot of her bed, caught her up, and as she played, she asked Jean Valjean a hundred questions: "Where was she? Was Paris large? Was

Madame Thénardier a long way off, and would she never return?" etc. All at once she exclaimed, "How pretty it is here!"

It was a frightful hole, but she felt free.

"Must I sweep?" she at length inquired.

"Play," said Jean Valjean.

Thus the day passed; and Cosette, feeling no anxiety at understanding nothing, was inexpressibly happy with her doll and that good man.

CHAPTER III

TWO MISFORTUNES MAKE GOOD FORTUNE

THE next morning at daybreak Jean Valjean was again standing by Cosette's bedside. He watched there motionless, waiting for her to wake.

Something new had entered his soul.

Jean Valjean had never loved anything. For twenty-five years he had been alone in the world, and had never been father, lover, husband, or friend. At the galleys he was wicked, gloomy, chaste, ignorant, and ferocious,—the heart of the old convict was full of virginities. His sister and his sister's children had left in him only a vague and remote memory, which at last entirely faded away. He had made every effort to find them, and, not being able to do so, forgot them,—human nature is thus constituted. The other tender emotions of his youth, if he had any, had fallen into an abyss.

When he saw Cosette, when he carried her off, he felt his heart stir. All the passion and affection within him were aroused, and rushed toward the child. He approached the bed on which she slept, and trembled with joy. He felt the pangs of a mother, and knew not what it meant; for the

great and strange emotion of a heart which is beginning to love is a very obscure and very sweet thing.

Poor old heart still fresh!

Only, as he was fifty-five, and Cosette eight, all the love he might have felt during his whole life was melted into a sort of ineffable glow.

This was the second white apparition which he had met. The bishop had caused the dawn of virtue to rise on his horizon, and Cosette now produced the dawn of love.

The first days passed in this bewilderment.

Cosette, too, became unconsciously different, poor little creature! She was so little when her mother left her that she did not remember her; and like all children, who resemble young vine-shoots, which cling to everything, she tried to love and failed. All had repulsed her,—the Thénardiers, their children, and other children. She had loved the dog, but he died; and after that, nothing and nobody would have anything to do with her. It is a sad thing to say, but at the age of eight she had a cold heart. It was not her fault; it was not the faculty of loving that she lacked, but it was, alas! the possibility. Hence, from the first day, her whole mind and heart began to love that good man; and she experienced what she had never known before,—a feeling of expansion.

The man no longer produced the effect upon her of being old or poor. She thought Jean Valjean handsome, just as she thought the garret pretty.

Such are the effects of dawn, childhood, youth, and joy. The novelty of the earth and of life has something to do with it; and nothing is so charming as the colouring reflection of happiness upon an attic. In this way we all have an azure garret in our past.

Nature, an interval of fifty years, divided Jean Valjean and Cosette; but destiny filled up this gulf. Destiny suddenly united and affianced with its irresistible power these two uprooted existences, so different in age, so similar in sorrow. One, in fact, was the complement of the other. Cosette's

instinct sought a father, as Jean Valjean's instinct sought a child, and to meet was to find each other. At the mysterious moment when their hands clasped, they were welded together; and when their two souls saw each other, they recognized that each was necessary to the other, and met in a close embrace.

Taking the words in their most comprehensive and absolute sense, we may say that, separated from every one by the walls of the tomb, Jean Valjean was a widower, as Cosette was an orphan; and this situation caused Jean Valjean to become Cosette's father after a celestial fashion.

And, in truth, the mysterious impression produced upon Cosette in the Chelles wood by Jean Valjean's hand as it grasped hers in the darkness was not an illusion, but a reality. His entrance into her destiny was the entrance of God.

Jean Valjean had selected his refuge well. His safety seemed absolutely secure.

The room which he occupied with Cosette was the one whose window looked out on the boulevard; and as it was the only one on that side of the house, he had not to fear the curiosity of neighbors, either in front or at the side.

The ground-floor of No. 50-52, a sort of rickety penthouse, was used as a tool-house by nursery-gardeners, and had no communication with the floor above. The latter, as we have said, contained several rooms and a few garrets, only one of which was occupied, the tenant being the old woman who kept house for Jean Valjean; the other rooms were uninhabited.

This old woman was known as the "chief lodger," and really performed the duties of a porter. She had let Valjean the room on Christmas day. He represented himself as a man of means ruined by Spanish bonds, who intended to live there with his little daughter. He paid six months' rent in advance, and requested the old woman to furnish the room in the way we have seen; and it was this woman who lit the fire in the stove and prepared everything on the evening of their arrival.

Weeks passed away, and these two beings led a happy life in their wretched garret.

With the dawn, Cosette began to laugh, chatter, and sing; for children, like birds, have their matin song.

Sometimes Jean Valjean took her little red chilblained hand and kissed it. The poor child, accustomed to be beaten, did not know what this meant, and ran away quite ashamed.

Sometimes she became serious, and looked at her little black frock. Cosette was no longer dressed in rags, but in mourning. She had left wretchedness behind and was entering life.

Jean Valjean set to work to teach her to read. Sometimes he remembered that it was with the idea of doing evil that he learned to read at the galleys, and this idea had ended in teaching a child to read. Then the old galley-slave smiled the sad smile of the angels.

He felt in it a premeditation of Heaven, and he lost himself in a reverie; for good thoughts have their depths as well as wicked ones.

Teaching Cosette to read and letting her play, almost constituted Jean Valjean's entire life; and then he spoke to her about her mother, and made her pray. She called him "father," and knew him by no other name.

He spent hours in watching her dress and undress her doll, and in listening to her prattle. Henceforth life appeared to him full of interest; men seemed to him good and just. He no longer reproached any one in his thoughts, and saw no reason why he should not live to a great age, now that this child loved him. He saw a whole future illumined by Cosette, as by a delicious light; and as the best of men are not exempt from selfish thoughts, he sometimes said to himself joyfully that she would be ugly.

Although it is only a personal opinion, we fancy that at the point which Jean Valjean had reached when he began to love Cosette, he required this fresh impulse to continue in the right path. He had just seen, under new aspects, the wickedness of men and the wretchedness of society; but the

aspects were incomplete, and unfortunately showed him only one side of the truth,—the fate of woman comprised in Fantine, and public authority personified in Javert. He had returned to the galleys, but this time for having done right. He had drunk the new cup of bitterness to the dregs. Disgust and weariness seized upon him. The very recollection of the bishop was approaching a temporary eclipse; and though it would have reappeared afterward, luminous and triumphant, still that holy recollection was beginning to fade. Who knows whether Jean Valjean were not on the eve of growing discouraged and of relapsing? But he loved, and became strong again. Alas! he was no less uncertain than Cosette. He protected her, and she strengthened him. Thanks to him, she was able to advance through life; thanks to her, he could continue in the path of virtue. He was that child's support, and she was his main-stay. Oh, unfathomable and divine mystery of the equilibrium of destiny!

CHAPTER IV

THE REMARKS OF THE CHIEF LODGER

JEAN VALJEAN was too prudent ever to go out by day. Every evening he walked out for an hour or two, sometimes alone, but generally with Cosette, in the most retired streets, and entering churches at nightfall. He usually went to St. Medard, which was the nearest church. When he did not take Cosette with him, she remained with the old woman; but it was her delight to go out with him. She preferred an hour with him to her ravishing conversations with Catherine. He walked along, holding her by the hand, and talking pleasantly with her; for Cosette turned out to be extremely gay.

The old woman cleaned, cooked, and bought food for them.

They lived quietly, always having a little fire, but as if they were very poor. Jean Valjean had made no change in the furniture since the first day, except that he had a wooden door put up in place of the glass one in Cosette's sleeping-closet.

He still wore his yellow coat, black breeches, and old hat; and in the streets he was taken for a poor man. Charitable women sometimes turned and gave him a sou, which he accepted with a low bow. Sometimes also he met some wretch asking alms. In such a case he looked behind to see that no one was watching, furtively approached the beggar, gave him money, now and then silver, and hurried away. This had its disadvantages, for people began to know him in the neighbourhood under the name of the "almsgiving beggar."

The old "chief lodger," a spiteful creature, full of envy and uncharitableness toward her neighbours, watched him closely, though he did not suspect it. She was rather deaf, which rendered her prone to gossip; and there remained to her from the past, two teeth, one atop and one at bottom, which she constantly rattled against each other. She questioned Cosette, who, knowing nothing, could tell nothing, except that she came from Montfermeil. One day, this spy saw Jean Valjean go into one of the uninhabited rooms in a way that seemed to her peculiar. She followed him with the stealthy step of an old cat, and was able to watch him, herself unseen, through the crack of the door, to which he turned his back, doubtless as a greater precaution. She saw him draw from his pocket a pair of scissors, needle and thread, then begin to rip the lining of his coat, and pull out a piece of yellow paper, which he unfolded. The old woman recognized with horror that it was a thousand-franc note (the second or third she had seen in her life), and she fled in terror.

A moment after he addressed her, and requested her to change the note for him, adding that it was his quarterly dividend, which he had received on the previous day. "When?" thought the old woman; "he did not go out till

six in the evening, and the bank is certainly not open at that hour." She went to change the note, and mentioned her conjectures. The amount of money, being considerably multiplied, afforded a grand topic of conversation for the gossips of the Rue des Vignes St. Marcel.

A few days after, Jean Valjean, in his shirt-sleeves, was chopping wood in the passage, and the old woman was in his room cleaning up. She was alone, for Cosette was admiring the wood-chopping. She saw the coat hanging on a nail and investigated it. The lining had been sewn up again; but the good woman felt it carefully, and fancied she could detect thicknesses of paper in the skirts and the facings. More bank-notes, of course!

She also noticed that there were all sorts of things in the pockets; not only the needles, scissors, and thread which she had seen, but a large pocket-book, a big clasp-knife, and most suspicious fact of all, several wigs of different colours. Each pocket of this coat seemed to be a sort of safeguard against unexpected events.

The inhabitants of the house thus reached the last days of winter.

CHAPTER V

A FIVE-FRANC PIECE FALLS TO THE GROUND AND MAKES A STIR

NEAR St. Medard's church there was a poor man who usually sat on the edge of a disused well, and to whom Jean Valjean often gave alms. He seldom passed without giving him a trifle, and sometimes spoke to him. Those who envied this beggar said that he was a police spy. He was an ex-beadle seventy-five years of age, who was constantly telling his beads.

One evening, as Jean Valjean passed alone, he saw the

beggar in his usual place under the lamp, which had just been lit. The man, according to his habit, seemed to be praying, and was crouched down. Jean Valjean went up to him and placed his usual gift in his hand. The beggar suddenly raised his eyes, looked fixedly at Jean Valjean, and then let his head drop again. This movement was like a flash, but Jean Valjean gave a start. He fancied that he saw by the flickering light of the lamp, not the placid and devout face of the old beadle, but a terrifying and familiar face. He felt as if he had suddenly found himself face to face with a tiger in the darkness. He shrank back, terrified, petrified, not daring to breathe, to speak, to remain, or to fly, staring at the beggar, who had dropped his head, which was wrapped in old rags, and did not appear to know that he was there. At this strange moment an instinct, perhaps the mysterious instinct of self-preservation, warned Valjean not to utter a syllable. The beggar was of the same height, wore the same rags, and looked as he did every day. "Stuff!" said Valjean. "I am mad, dreaming; it is impossible!" And he went home sorely troubled in mind.

He hardly dared confess to himself that the face which he fancied he had seen was Javert's face.

At night, on reflecting, he regretted that he had not spoken to the man and made him raise his head a second time.

The next evening he returned, and found the beggar at his seat. "Good-day, my man," said Jean Valjean, resolutely, as he gave him a sou. The beggar raised his head, and replied in a whining voice, "Thank you, my good gentleman." It was certainly the old beadle.

Jean Valjean felt fully reassured, and began to laugh. "How on earth could I have thought that it was Javert? Why, am I growing blind?" and he thought no more of it.

A few days later, at about eight in the evening, he was giving Cosette a spelling lesson, when he heard the house door open and then close again. This appeared to him

singular; for the old woman, who alone lived in the house besides himself, always went to bed at nightfall to save her candles. Jean Valjean made Cosette a sign to be silent, for he heard some one coming upstairs. After all, it might be that the old woman felt ill, and had been to the chemist's shop. He listened.

The footstep was heavy, and sounded like that of a man; but the old woman wore thick shoes, and nothing so closely resembles a man's footstep as that of an old woman. For all that, though, Jean Valjean blew out his candle.

He had sent Cosette to bed, saying in a whisper, "Make no noise," and as he kissed her forehead the footsteps stopped.

He remained silently in his chair, with his back to the door, holding his breath in the darkness.

After a long interval, hearing nothing more, he turned noiselessly, and, on looking at his door, saw a light through the keyhole, which formed a sort of a sinister star in the blackness of the door and the wall. There was evidently some one there holding a candle in his hand and listening.

A few minutes passed, and then the light went away. Still he did not hear the sound of footsteps, which seemed to indicate that the person who had been listening had taken off his shoes.

Jean Valjean threw himself full dressed on his bed, and could not close his eyes all night.

At daybreak, when he was just yielding to fatigue, he was aroused by the creaking of a door which opened into a room at the end of the passage, and then heard the same footstep which had ascended the stairs on the previous evening, drawing nearer. He sprang out of bed and put his eye to the keyhole, which was rather large, in the hope of seeing the man who had listened at his door over night. It was really a man, who this time passed the door without stopping. The passage was still too dark for him to distinguish his face; but when the man reached the staircase, a ray of light from outside fell upon him, and Valjean saw

his back perfectly. He was a tall man, dressed in a long frock coat, with a cudgel under his arm; and he was very like Javert.

Valjean might have tried to get another look at him through his window facing the boulevard, but he would have had to open it, and that he dared not do.

It was plain that this man came in with a key, and was quite at home. Who gave him this key? What did it mean?

At seven o'clock, when the old woman came to clean up, Jean Valjean gave her a piercing glance, but did not question her. The good woman was as calm as usual, and as she swept she said to him:—

“I suppose you heard some one come in last night, sir?”

In those days, and on that boulevard, eight in the evening was the blackest night.

“Yes, I remember,” he said, in the most natural tone.
“Who was it?”

“A new lodger in the house.”

“What is his name?”

“I forget,— Dumont or Daumont, something like that.”

“And who may he be?”

The old woman looked at him with her little ferret eyes, and answered:—

“He lives on his income, like you.”

Perhaps she meant nothing, but Jean Valjean fancied that he could detect a hidden meaning.

When the old woman had gone, he made a package of some hundred francs which he had in a chest of drawers, and put it in his pocket. In spite of his precautions to keep the money from rattling, a five-franc piece fell from his hand and rolled noisily on the floor.

At nightfall he went down and looked attentively all along the boulevard. He saw nobody, and it seemed utterly deserted. It is true that some one might have been concealed behind the trees.

He went up again, and said to Cosette, “Come!”

He took her hand, and both left the house together.

BOOK V

FOR A STILL HUNT, DUMB DOGS

CHAPTER I

STRATEGIC ZIGZAGS

AN observation is necessary here in regard to the present pages and others which will follow.

The author of this work, who is forced, he regrets to say, to allude to himself, has been absent from Paris for many years; and since he left that city it has been transformed, and a new city has sprung up, which is, to some extent, unknown to him. He need not say that he is fond of Paris, for it is his mental birthplace. Owing to demolitions and rebuilding, the Paris of his youth, the Paris which he religiously carried away in his memory, is now a Paris of the past. Permit him, then, to speak of that Paris as if it still existed. It is possible that at the present day there is neither street nor house at the spot where the author purposed to lead the reader, saying, "In such a street there is such a house." If the readers like to take the trouble, they can verify. As for him, he does not know new Paris, and writes with old Paris before his eyes in an illusion which is precious to him. It is sweet to him to fancy that something still remains of what he saw when he was in his own country, and that all has not faded away. So long as you move about your native land, you imagine that those streets are matters of indifference to you, that those roofs and

doors are as nothing, that those walls are strangers to you, that those trees are no better than any others, that those houses which you do not enter are useless to you, and that the pavement on which you walk is made of stones and nothing more. Later on, when you are no longer there, you find that those streets are dear to you; that you miss those roofs, windows, and doors; that the walls are necessary to you; that you love the trees; that those houses which you did not enter, you entered daily; and that you left your very soul, your blood, and our heart upon those paving-stones. All those spots which you no longer see, which perhaps you may never see again, and whose image you have retained, assume a melancholy charm, recur to you with the sadness of an apparition, make the sacred land visible to you, and are, so to speak, the very form of France; and you love and evoke them as they are, as they were, obstinately refusing to make any change in them, for you cling to the face of your country as to the countenance of your mother.

Let us be permitted, then, to speak of the past in the present. We beg our readers to bear this in mind, and continue our narrative.

Jean Valjean at once left the boulevard and entered the streets, making as many turns as he could, and at times retracing his steps to make sure that he was not followed.

This manœuvre is peculiar to the hunted deer; and on ground where tracks are left, it possesses the advantage of deceiving huntsmen and dogs. In venery it is called a "false reimbushment."

The moon was at its full, and Jean Valjean was not sorry for this; for as the luminary was still close to the horizon, it formed large patches of light and shade in the streets. He was able to slip along the houses and walls on the dark side and watch the bright side; perhaps he did not sufficiently consider that the dark side escaped his notice. Still, in all the deserted lanes which border the Rue de

Poliveau he thought he felt certain that no one was following him.

Cosette walked on without asking questions. The sufferings of the first six years of her life had introduced something passive into her nature. Moreover,—and this is a remark which we shall have to revert more than once,—she was accustomed to the singularities of her companion and the strange mutations of fate; and then she felt safe, as she was with him. Jean Valjean did not know whether he was going any more than Cosette. He trusted God as she trusted him. He fancied that he also held some one greater than himself by the hand, and felt an invisible being guiding him. Moreover he had no settled idea, plan, or scheme. He was not absolutely sure that it was Javert; and then again it might be Javert, and Javert might not know that he was Jean Valjean. Was he not disguised? Was he not supposed to be dead? Still, during the last few days several things had occurred which were becoming singular, and he wanted no more of them. He was resolved not to return to No. 50–52; and, like the animal driven from its lair, he sought a hole in which to hide until he could find a lodging.

He described several labyrinths in the Quartier Mouffetard, which was as fast asleep as if it were still subject to mediæval discipline and the yoke of the curfew. He combined several streets in various fashions, with clever strategy. There were lodging-houses in the region where he now was, but he did not enter them, as he did not find anything to suit him; and he did not for a moment suppose that if any one were on his trail, it had been lost again.

As the clock of St. Etienne du Mont struck eleven, he passed the police office at No. 14, in the Rue de Pontoise. A few minutes later, the instinct to which we have referred made him look round, and he distinctly saw, by the superintendent's lantern, which betrayed them, three men, who were following him closely, pass in turn under that lantern, on the dark side of the street. One of these men entered

the alley leading to the office, and the one who walked in front struck him as decidedly suspicious.

"Come, child," he said to Cosette, and he hastened out of the Rue de Pontoise.

He made a circuit, skirted the Passage des Patriarches, which was closed at that hour, and eventually turned into the Rue des Postes.

There is an open space here, where Rollin College now stands, and into which the Rue Neuve St. Geneviève runs.

(We need hardly say that the Rue Neuve St. Geneviève is an old street, and that a post-chaise does not pass along the Rue des Postes once in ten years. This street was inhabited by potters in the thirteenth century, and its real name is Rue des Pots.)

The moon threw a bright light upon this open space, and Jean Valjean hid himself in a door-way, calculating that if the men were still following him, he could not fail to have a good look at them as they crossed this open space.

In fact, three minutes had not elapsed when the men reappeared. There were now four of them, all tall, dressed in long brown coats and round hats, and holding large sticks in their hands. They were rendered no less alarming by their stature and huge fists than by their sinister march through the darkness; they looked like four spectres disguised as citizens.

They stopped in the centre of the square, and formed a group as if consulting, and apparently undecided. The leader turned and pointed with his right hand in the direction Jean Valjean had taken, while another seemed to point with some degree of obstinacy in the opposite direction. When the first man turned, the moon lit up his face brilliantly, and Jean Valjean recognized Javert perfectly.

CHAPTER II

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT THE BRIDGE OF AUSTERLITZ
WILL BEAR WAGONS

UNCERTAINTY ceased for Jean Valjean; but fortunately it still lasted for the men. He took advantage of their hesitation. It was time lost by them and gained by him. He left the gate-way in which he was concealed, and pushed on along the Rue des Postes toward the region of the Jardin des Plantes. Cosette began to feel tired, so he took her in his arms and carried her. No one was passing, and the lamps had not been lit on account of the moon.

He redoubled his pace.

In a few strides he reached the Goblet pottery, on the front of which the moonshine made the old inscription distinctly legible:—

“This is the shop of Goblet and his son.
Come choose your pitchers and jugs,
Your pots, your pipes, your mugs;
The sign of the Heart sells trumps to every one.”

He left the Rue de la Clef behind him, skirted the Jardin des Plantes, and reached the quay. Here he turned; the quay was deserted. The streets were deserted. There was no one behind him, and he breathed again.

He reached the Austerlitz bridge, where toll was still exacted; and he handed the toll-man a sou.

“It is two sous,” said the old soldier in charge; “you are carrying a child who can walk, so you must pay for two.”

He paid, though greatly vexed that his passing had given rise to any remark. Every flight should be a slipping away.

A heavy wain was crossing the Seine at the same time

as himself, on its way like him to the right bank. This was useful for him, as he could cross the entire bridge in its shadow.

On reaching the middle of the bridge, Cosette, whose feet were benumbed, asked to be put down. He set her on the ground, and took her by the hand again.

After crossing the bridge he saw, a little to his right, timber-yards, toward which he proceeded. In order to reach them he must cross an open, brilliantly lighted space; but he did not hesitate. His pursuers were evidently thrown out, and Jean Valjean believed himself out of danger; he might be hunted, but he was not pursued.

A little street, the Rue due Chemin Vert St. Antoine, ran between two timber-yards, enclosed by walls. It was narrow, dark, and seemed expressly made for him; but before entering it, he looked back.

From the spot where he stood, he could see the whole length of the bridge of Austerlitz.

Four shadows had just come upon it, and were walking toward the right bank.

They were the four men.

Valjean gave a start like a re-captured animal.

One hope was left him. It was, that the four men had not been upon the bridge when he crossed the large illuminated space with Cosette.

In that case, by entering the little street before him, he might escape, if he could reach the timber-yards, kitchen-gardens, fields, and land not yet built on.

He fancied that he could trust to this little silent street, and entered it.

CHAPTER III

CONSULT THE MAP OF PARIS IN 1727.

AFTER going three hundred yards, he came to a spot where the road forked; he had before him, as it were, the two branches of a Y. Which should he choose?

He did not hesitate, but took the one to the right, because the other ran toward the faubourg,—that is to say, toward inhabited regions,—while the right branch went in the direction of the open country, or deserted regions.

Still, they did not walk very rapidly, for Cosette checked Valjean's pace. He took her up and began to carry her again. Cosette laid her head on his shoulder and did not say a word.

From time to time he looked back, while careful to keep on the dark side of the street. The street was straight in his rear.

The first two or three times that he turned, he saw nothing; the silence was profound, and he continued his walk with a little more confidence.

All at once, on turning suddenly, he fancied that he saw something moving in the part of the street through which he had just passed, far off in the darkness.

He rushed forward rather than walked, hoping to find some side lane by which he could escape, and once again break the scent.

He reached a wall, which, however, did not render further progress impossible; for it was a wall skirting a cross-lane, in which the street he had taken ended. Here again he must make up his mind whether to turn to the right or left. He looked to the right. The lane ran for some distance between buildings which were either barns or sheds, and then stopped at a blind alley.

The end of the blind alley, a tall white wall, was dis-

tinctly visible. He looked to the left. On this side the lane was open, and at a distance of about two hundred yards entered a street, of which it was an affluent.

On that side safety lay.

When he turned to his left in order to reach this street, he saw at the corner of the street and the lane a sort of motionless black statue, evidently a man posted there to prevent him from passing.

Jean Valjean fell back.

The part of Paris where he now was, situated between the Faubourg St. Antoine and La Rapé, is one of those which have been utterly transformed by those recent improvements which some call disfigurement, others transfiguration. The fields, the timber-yards, and old buildings have been removed, and there are now brand-new, wide streets, arenas, circuses, hippodromes, railway stations, and a prison, Mazas,—progress, as we see, with its corrective.

Half a century back, in that popular language, all made up of traditions, which persists in calling the Institute “Les Quatre Nations,” and the Opera Comique “Feydeau,” the precise spot where Jean Valjean now stood was called “Little Picpus.” The Porte St. Jacques, the Porte Paris, the Barrière des Sergents, the Porcherons, the Galilote, the Celestins, the Capucins, the Mail, the Bourbe, the Tree of Cracow, Little Poland, and Little Picpus are names of old Paris, which survive amid the new. The memory of the people hovers over these relics of the past.

Little Picpus, which, by the way, scarce existed, and was never more than the outline of a quarter, had almost the monkish look of a Spanish town. Few of the streets were paved, and hardly any houses were built on them; except for two or three streets, to which we are about to refer, all was wall and solitude. There was not a shop or a vehicle, scarce a candle lighted in the windows, and every light was put out by ten o'clock. There were gardens, convents, timber-yards, and marshes; a few low houses with walls as lofty as themselves.

Such was this region in the last century. The Revolution fiercely assailed it, and the Republican Board of Works demolished and made gaps in it. Rubbish shoots were established there. Thirty years ago this quarter was disappearing under the erasing process of new buildings, and now it is entirely obliterated. Little Picpus, of which no modern map retains a trace, is very clearly indicated in the map of 1727, published at Paris, by Denis Thirery, Rue St. Jacques, opposite the Rue du Platre; and at Lyons by Jean Girin, Rue Mercière. Little Picpus had what we have just called a Y of streets formed by the Rue du Chemin Vert St. Antoine, which spread out into two branches, the left-hand one taking the name of the Little Rue Picpus, and the right-hand that of the Rue Polonceau. The two branches of the Y were joined at the top by a sort of cross-bar called the Rue Droit-mur. Little Rue Picpus went on toward the Leloir market. Any one coming from the Seine, on reaching the end of Rue Polonceau had on his right Rue Droit-mur, turning sharply at a right angle, in front of him the wall of that street, and on his left a truncated prolongation of the Rue Droit-mur, called Genrot Alley.

It was here that Jean Valjean found himself.

As we said, on perceiving the black figure, standing on watch at the corner of the Rue Droit-mur and Little Rue Picpus, he fell back; for he was doubtless shadowed by this phantom.

What was to be done?

He had no time to retreat; for what he had seen moving in the darkness a few moments before in his rear, was, of course, Javert and his squad. Javert was probably already at the beginning of the street at the end of which Jean Valjean stood. Javert, according to all appearances, was acquainted with this labyrinth, and had taken his precautions by sending one of his men to guard the outlet. These conjectures, which so closely resembled certainty, whirled suddenly in Jean Valjean's troubled brain like a handful of

dust raised by an unexpected puff of wind. He examined the blind alley; that was barred. He examined the Rue Picpus; a sentry was there. He saw the dark shadow distinctly thrown on the white moonlit pavement. To advance was to fall into this man's clutches; to retreat was to throw himself into Javert's arms. Jean Valjean felt himself caught in a net which was being slowly hauled in. He looked up to heaven in despair.

CHAPTER IV

ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE

IN order to understand what follows, the reader must form an exact idea of the Droit-mur lane, and in particular of the corner on the left when one turns from the Rue Polonceau into this lane. The lane was almost entirely bordered on the right, as far as Little Rue Picpus, by poor-looking houses; on the left by a single severe-looking edifice, composed of several parts, which gradually grew higher by a story or two as they approached Little Rue Picpus; so that this building, which was very lofty on that side, was very low in the direction of the Rue Polonceau, where, at the corner to which we have alluded, it sank so low as to be only a wall. This wall did not run parallel with the lane, but formed a very deep niche, concealed by its two corners from any two observers who might be, one in the Rue Polonceau and the other in the Rue Droit-mur.

From this niche the wall extended along the Rue Polonceau up to a house bearing the number 49, and in the Rue Droit-mur, where it was much shorter, as far as the frowning building, to which we have referred, whose gable it intersected, thus forming a new re-entering angle in the street. This gable had a gloomy appearance, for only one window

was visible, or, to speak more correctly, two shutters covered with sheet zinc and always closed.

The description of the locality which we are now giving is strictly correct, and will doubtless arouse a very precise memory in the mind of old inhabitants of the quarter.

The niche in the wall was entirely filled by a thing that resembled a colossal and wretched door; it was a vast, shapeless collection of perpendicular planks, the top ones wider than those below, and fastened together by long cross-strips of iron.

At one side there was a covered carriage-entrance of ordinary dimensions, which had apparently not been made more than fifty years before. A linden-tree displayed its branches above the niche, and the wall was covered with ivy on the side toward the Rue Polonceau.

In Jean Valjean's desperate situation this gloomy building had an uninhabited and solitary look about it which tempted him. He hurriedly examined it, and said to himself that if he could only contrive to enter it he might perhaps be saved. He had first an idea and then a hope.

In the centre of the frontage of this building, on the Rue Droit-mur, there were old leaden spouts at all the windows of the different floors. The various branches, which led to a central spout, formed a sort of tree on the façade; these ramifications with their hundred elbows imitated those old, leafless vine-stocks which cling to the front of ancient farmhouses.

This strange espalier with its branches of lead and iron was the first thing that caught Jean Valjean's attention. He seated Cosette with her back against a post, bidding her be silent, and hurried to the spot where the main conduit reached the ground. Perhaps there might be a way to scale it and enter the house, but the spout was worn out and scarce held to its fastenings; besides, all the windows of this silent house were defended by thick iron bars,—even in the garrets. And then the moon shone full on this front, and the man watching at the end of the street would see him

climb up ; and then, what was he to do with Cosette ? How was he to hoist her to the top of a three-story house ?

He gave up all idea of climbing up the spout, and crawled along in the shadow of the wall to re-enter the Rue Polonceau.

When he reached the place where he had left Cosette, he noticed that no one could see him there. As we stated, he was safe from all eyes, no matter from what direction they came ; moreover, he was in the shadow ; and then, lastly, there were two doors, which might perhaps be forced. The wall over which he saw the linden-tree and the ivy evidently belonged to a garden in which he could at least conceal himself, though there was as yet no foliage on the trees, and pass the remainder of the night.

Time was slipping away ; he must act quickly. He tried the carriage entrance, and at once perceived that it was fastened inside and out, and then went to the other great gate with more hope.

It was frightfully decrepit ; its very size rendered it less solid. The planks were rotten, and the iron bands, of which there were only three, were rusty. It seemed possible to break through this worm-eaten affair.

On examining it, however, he saw that it was not a gate ; it had no hinges, cross-bars, lock, or partition in the centre. The iron bands traversed it from side to side without a break. Through the cracks in the planks he caught a glimpse of unhewn stone and slabs coarsely mortared together, which passers-by might still have seen there ten years back. He was forced to acknowledge with consternation that this apparent gate was simply the outer decoration of a building against which it was placed. It was easy to tear off a plank, but he would find himself face to face with a wall.

CHAPTER V

THING IMPOSSIBLE BY GASLIGHT

AT this moment a hollow, measured sound was heard at some distance, and Jean Valjean ventured to take a peep round the corner of the street. Seven or eight soldiers were entering the street; he could see their bayonets gleam. They were coming toward him.

These soldiers, at the head of whom he distinguished Javert's tall form, advanced slowly and cautiously, and halted frequently; it was plain that they were exploring all the corners and every door and lane.

It was — and here conjecture could not be wrong — some patrol which Javert had met and requested to assist him.

Judging from the pace at which they marched, and the halts they made, they would require about a quarter of an hour to reach the spot where Jean Valjean was. It was a frightful thought; a few moments only separated him from the awful precipice which yawned before him for the third time. And the galleys were now not merely the galleys, but Cosette lost to him forever,— that is to say, a life resembling the interior of a tomb.

There was only one thing possible.

Jean Valjean had one peculiarity; he might be said to carry two wallets: in one had the thoughts of a saint, in the other the formidable talents of a convict; and he rummaged in one or the other as occasion required.

Among other resources, thanks to his numerous escapes from the Toulon galleys, he had become a perfect master of the incredible art of raising himself without ladder or cramping-irons, by sheer muscular strength, by pressing against his neck, shoulders, hips, and knees, with the slight help of the rare projections of the stone, in the right angle of a wall, to the sixth floor if necessary,— an art which

rendered so terrible and so celebrated that corner of the yard in the Paris conciergerie by which the condemned convict Battemolle made his escape twenty years ago.

Jean Valjean measured with his eye the height of the wall above which he saw the linden-tree, and found that it was about eighteen feet. The lower part of the angle, which it formed with the gable-end of the large building, was filled up with a triangular mass of masonry, very common in Parisian corners.

This mass was about five feet high, and the space to be cleared from the top of it was not more than fourteen. The wall was surmounted by a flat stone without a coping. Cosette was the difficulty, for she could not climb a wall.

Abandon her? He did not once think of that, but to carry her was impossible. A man needs his whole strength to accomplish such an ascent; and the slightest burden would displace his centre of gravity and hurl him down.

He required a rope, but he had none. Where was he to find a rope at midnight in the Rue Polonceau? Assuredly at this moment if he had possessed a kingdom, he would have given it for a rope.

All extreme situations have their lightning flashes, which at one moment blind, at another enlighten us.

Jean Valjean's desperate glance fell on the lamp-post in the blind alley.

In those days there were no gaslights in the streets of Paris; at nightfall, lamps were lit at regular intervals. They were pulled up and down by a rope which crossed the street from side to side, and was fitted into a groove in the post. The pulley over which this rope ran was kept in an iron box under the lamp-post, of which the lamp-lighter had the key; and the rope itself was protected by a metal case.

Jean Valjean leaped across the street, burst the lock of the box with the point of his knife, and a moment later was again at Cosette's side, holding a rope. Such gloomy

finders of expedients, when struggling with fatality, set rapidly to work.

We have mentioned that the lamps were not lit on this night; the one in the blind alley, therefore, was naturally extinguished also, and any one might have passed directly under it without noticing that it was no longer in its place.

The hour, the place, the darkness, Jean Valjean's pre-occupation, his singular gestures, his coming and going, were all beginning to alarm Cosette. Any other child would have screamed long before, but she confined herself to pulling the skirt of his coat. The noise of the approaching patrol constantly became more distinct.

"Father," she whispered, "I am frightened. Who is coming?"

"Hush!" replied the unhappy man, "it is Madame Thénardier." The child trembled, and he added: "Do not say a word, but leave me to act; if you cry out or sob she will catch you and take you back again."

Then without haste, but without making a useless movement, with firm and sharp precision, which was the more remarkable at such a moment, when the patrol and Javert might be instantly expected, he undid his cravat, fastened it round Cosette's body under the armpits, taking care not to hurt her, fastened the rope to the cravat with a sailor's knot, took the other end in his teeth, pulled off his shoes and stockings, which he threw over the wall, and began to raise himself in the corner of the wall and the gable with as much solidity and certainty as if he had cramping-irons under his heels and elbows. Half a minute had not elapsed ere he was kneeling on the top.

Cosette watched him in amazement, without a word; for his mention of the landlady's name had frozen her blood. All at once she heard him say in a very low voice:

"Lean against the wall."

She obeyed.

"You must not say a word, or be frightened," he continued.

She felt herself lifted from the ground; but before she had time to look round, she found herself on the top of the wall.

Jean Valjean placed her on his back, took her two little hands in his large left hand, lay down flat on his stomach, and crawled along the wall until he reached the cant. As he had suspected, there was a building here, whose roof began at the top of the bastard gate and descended in a gentle slope nearly to the ground, grazing the linden-tree. This was a fortunate circumstance, for the wall was much higher on this side than on that of the street, and he could scarcely see the ground, so far was it beneath him.

He had just reached the slope of the roof, and had not yet loosed his hold of the wall, when a violent uproar announced the arrival of the patrol, and he heard Javert's thundering voice:—

“Search the blind alley; all the streets are guarded, and I will wager that he is there.”

The soldiers rushed forward into the alley.

Jean Valjean slid down the roof, still supporting Cosette, reached the linden-tree, and leaped to the ground. Whether from terror or courage, the child had not breathed a sound. Her hands were only slightly grazed.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEGINNING OF AN ENIGMA

JEAN VALJEAN found himself in a huge garden of most singular appearance,—one of those gloomy gardens that seem made to be looked at in winter and by night. This garden was of an oblong shape, with a walk of great poplars at the end, tall shrubs in the corner, and an unshaded space in the centre, where one huge, solitary tree

could be distinguished. There were also a few stunted fruit-trees bristling with brambles, vegetable plots, a melon bed, whose frames glistened in the moonlight, and an old well. Here and there were stone benches that seemed black with moss; the walks were bordered with small gloomy-looking, upright shrubs. Grass covered one half of the walks and green mould the other half.

Jean Valjean stood beside the building by help of whose roof he had descended; near him was a pile of fagots, and behind the latter, close to the wall, a stone statue, whose mutilated face was merely a shapeless mask, appearing indistinctly in the darkness.

The building was a sort of ruin, containing several dismantled rooms, one of which, much encumbered, was apparently used as a shed.

The large building in the Rue Droit-mur had two façades looking into this garden at right angles; and these façades were even more melancholy than those on the street. All the windows were barred, and not a single light could be seen, while at the upper window there were scuttles as in prisons. One of these fronts threw its shadow upon the other, which fell back over the garden like an immense black cloth.

No other house was in sight, and the end of the garden was lost in mist and darkness. Still, walls could be indistinctly made out, intersecting one another, as if there were other gardens beyond, and the low roofs in the Rue Polonceau.

Nothing wilder and more solitary than this garden could well be imagined. There was no one in it, as was natural at such an hour; but it did not look as if the spot were made for any one to walk in, even in bright daylight.

Jean Valjean's first care was to find his shoes and stockings and put them on again, then to enter the shed with Cosette. A man who is escaping never considers himself sufficiently concealed; and the child, who was still thinking of Madame Thénardier, shared his instinct for concealment.

Cosette trembled and clung close to him; for she heard

the tumultuous noise of the patrol searching the street and lane, the blows of their musket-butts against the stones, Javert's appeals to the men whom he had posted, and his oaths, mingled with words which could not be distinguished.

At the expiration of a quarter of an hour this stormy rumble seemed to be retiring, and Jean Valjean held his breath.

He had gently laid his hand on Cosette's mouth.

The solitude in which he found himself was so strangely calm, however, that the furious uproar so close at hand did not even cast the shadow of a misgiving over it. All at once, in the midst of this profound calm, a new sound burst forth,—a heavenly, divine, ineffable sound, as ravishing as the other had been horrible. It was a hymn which issued from the darkness,—a dazzling compound of prayer and harmony in the dark and fearful silence of the night; female voices, but voices composed at once of the pure accents of virgins and the innocent voices of children,—such voices as do not belong to earth, and resemble those which the new-born still hear and the dying already hear. This chant came from the gloomy building that commanded the garden, and at the moment when the noise of the demons was retiring; it seemed like a choir of angels approaching in the dark.

Cosette and Jean Valjean fell on their knees.

They knew not what it was, they knew not where they were, but both man and child,—the penitent and the innocent,—felt that they must kneel.

The voices had this strange property about them, that they did not prevent the edifice from seeming deserted; it was like a supernatural chant in an uninhabited house.

While the voices sang, Jean Valjean thought of nothing else; he no longer saw the night, but an azure sky. He fancied that the wings which we all have within us, were expanding within him.

The singing ceased. It had probably lasted some time,

but Jean Valjean could not have said how long; for hours of ecstasy never occupy more than a minute.

All had become silent again. There was no sound in the garden, no sound in the street; all that had threatened, all that had reassured, had faded away. The wind shook some dry grass on the top of the wall, which produced a soft and melancholy sound.

CHAPTER VII

CONTINUATION OF THE ENIGMA

THE night breeze had risen, which proved that it must be between one and two in the morning. Cosette said nothing; and as she had seated herself beside him, and leaned her head against him, Jean Valjean fancied that she was asleep. He bent down and looked at her; her eyes were wide open, and she had a pensive look which pained him.

She was still trembling.

"Are you sleepy?" he asked.

"I am very cold," she replied. A moment after she added: "Is she still there?"

"Who?" asked Jean Valjean.

"Madame Thénardier."

Jean Valjean had forgotten the means that he had employed to keep Cosette silent.

"Ah," he said, "she is gone, and you have nothing to fear."

The child sighed, as if a weight had been taken off her breast.

The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, and the wind grew more cutting every moment. He took off his coat and wrapped Cosette in it,

"Are you warmer now?" he said.

"Oh, yes, father."

"Well, wait for me a minute. I will be back soon."

He left the ruin, and crept along the large building in search of some better shelter. He came across doors, but they were closed; and there were bars on all the ground-floor windows.

After passing the inner angle of the edifice, he saw some arched windows, where he perceived a faint light. He raised himself on tiptoe and looked through one of these windows; they all belonged to a large hall, paved with flag-stones, where nothing could be distinguished but a little light and great shadows. The light came from a night-lamp burning in one corner. This hall was deserted, and nothing was stirring in it; and yet, after a long look, he fancied that he saw on the ground something that seemed to be covered with a pall, and resembled a human form. It was stretched out flat, with its face against the stones, its arms forming a cross, and motionless as death. From a sort of snake which dragged along the pavement, it looked as if this sinister form had a rope round its neck.

The whole hall was bathed in that mist of dimly lighted places, which intensifies horror.

Jean Valjean often said afterward, that, although he had witnessed many mournful sights in his life, he had never seen one more chilling or terrifying than this enigmatical figure performing some strange mystery in this gloomy spot, and viewed thus through the darkness. It was frightful to suppose that it might be dead, and more frightful yet to think that it might possibly still be alive.

He had the courage to place his face to the pane, and to watch whether the figure would stir; but though he remained for what seemed to him a very long time, the outstretched form made no movement. All at once he felt himself assailed by an indescribable horror, and he ran toward the shed without daring to look back; he fancied that

if he turned his head, he should see the figure striding after him and waving its arms.

When he reached the ruin he panted, his knees gave way, and the perspiration ran down his back.

Where was he? Who could have imagined anything like this sepulchre in the heart of Paris? What was this strange house?—an edifice full of nocturnal mystery, calling to souls in the darkness with the voice of angels, and when they came suddenly offering them this frightful vision; promising to open the bright gates of heaven and instead opening the horrible gates of the tomb! And it was really a mansion,—a house, which had its number in a street. It was not a dream; but he was obliged to touch the stones in order to believe it.

Cold, anxiety, apprehension, and the emotions of the night had given him a real fever; and all these ideas were confused in his brain.

He approached Cosette. She was asleep.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENIGMA INCREASES

THE child had laid her head on a stone and fallen asleep.

Jean Valjean sat down by her side and began to gaze at her; gradually, as he gazed, he grew calm, and regained possession of his freedom of mind.

He clearly perceived this truth, the basis of his future life, that, so long as she was there, so long as he had her by his side, he should require nothing except for her, nor fear anything save on her account. He did not even know that he was very cold, for he had taken off his coat to cover her.

Still, through the reverie into which he had fallen, he had heard for some time past a singular noise, like the tinkling of a bell; and it was in the garden. It was distinct, though faint, and resembled cattle-bells, which produce a gentle melody at night in the grazing-fields.

This noise made him turn, and he saw that there was some one in the garden.

A being looking like a man was walking among the melon-frames, rising, stooping, and stopping with regular movements, as if he were dragging or stretching out something on the ground. The man was apparently lame.

Jean Valjean trembled with the continual tremor of the unhappy. Everything is hostile and suspicious to them; they distrust the day because it allows them to be seen; and the night because it helps to surprise them. A moment ago he shuddered because the garden was deserted, and now he shuddered because there was some one in it.

He fell back from chimerical to real terror. He said to himself that Javert and the police had probably not gone away; that they had, in any case, left watchmen in the street; and that if this man discovered him, he would give an alarm, and hand him over to the police. He gently raised the sleeping Cosette in his arms, and carried her behind a mass of old furniture in the most remote part of the shed; Cosette did not stir.

From this point he observed the movements of the being in the melon-patch; the strange thing was that the noise of the bell followed this man's every movement. When he approached, the sound approached; when he went away, the sound went away. If he made a sudden movement, a little peal followed the movement; and when he stopped, the noise ceased. It appeared evident that the bell was fastened to this man; but in that case what could be the meaning of it? Who was this man to whom a bell was fastened, as if he were a ram or an ox?

As he asked himself these questions, he touched Cosette's hands; they were icy cold.

"Heavens!" he cried. And he whispered, "Cosette!" She did not open her eyes. He shook her sharply, but she did not awake.

"Can she be dead?" he said to himself; and he sprang up, shivering from head to foot.

The most frightful thoughts crossed his mind pell-mell. There are moments when hideous surmises assail us like a band of furies, and violently force the partitions of our brain. When it is a question of those whom we love, our prudence invents all sorts of follies. He remembered that sleep in the open air on a cold night might be mortal.

Cosette was pale, and had fallen at full length on the ground at his feet without a movement.

He listened to her breathing; she breathed, but so faintly that it seemed as if the respiration might cease at any moment.

How was he to warm her? How was he to wake her? All that did not refer to this slipped from his mind, and he rushed wildly from the shed.

Cosette must be in bed before a fire within a quarter of an hour.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN WITH THE BELL

HE walked straight up to the man whom he saw in the garden; and as he did so, he took from his pocket the roll of silver.

This man was looking down, and did not see him coming; in a few strides Jean Valjean was by his side, and addressed him with the cry, "One hundred francs!"

The man started and raised his eyes.

"One hundred francs to be gained," continued Valjean,

"if you will give me shelter for this night." The moon shone full upon his terrified face.

"Why, is it you, Father Madeleine!" said the man.

That name, uttered thus, in the darkness, in this strange spot, by this strange man, made Valjean shrink away. He had expected everything save that. The man who thus addressed him was a stooping, lame old man, dressed like a peasant, and wearing on his left leg a leathern kneecap, from which hung a large bell.

It was impossible to distinguish his face, which was in the shadow; still, the man doffed his bonnet, and said all in a tremor:

"Oh, Lord! how did you get here, Father Madeleine? Which way did you come in? Why, you must have fallen from heaven. Well, if ever you do fall, it will be from there. And then, what a state you are in! You have no cravat, no hat, and no coat! Do you know that you would frighten anybody who did not know you? No coat! oh, my goodness, are the saints going mad now? But how *did* you get in here?"

His words tumbled over each other. He spoke with rustic volubility, in which there was nothing alarming; and it was all said with a mixture of stupefaction and simple kindness.

"Who are you, and what house is this?" asked Jean Valjean.

"Oh, Lord, that is too much," exclaimed the old man. "Why, did you not get me the situation, and in this house, too? What, don't you recognize me?"

"No," said Jean Valjean; "and how is it that you know me?"

"You saved my life," said the man.

He turned, a moonbeam played on his face, and Jean Valjean recognized old Fauchelevent.

"Ah!" he said, "it is you? Oh, now I recognize you."

"That is lucky," the old man said reproachfully.

"And what are you doing here?" asked Jean Valjean.

"Why, I am covering my melons, to be sure."

In fact, old Fauchelevent held in his hand when Jean Valjean accosted him, a piece of matting, which he was engaged in spreading over the melon-frame. He had laid a number of pieces during the hour that he had been in the garden, and it was this operation that produced the peculiar movements which Valjean had noticed from the shed.

He continued:—

"I said to myself, there is a bright moon, and it is going to freeze, so I had better put their great-coats on my melons." And he added, as he looked at Valjean, with a grin, "You should have done the same. But how did you get here?"

Valjean, finding himself known to this man, at least under the name of Madeleine, thenceforth advanced cautiously. He multiplied his questions; and, curiously enough, they changed parts,—he, the intruder, became the questioner.

"And what is that bell you have on your knee?"

"That," Fauchelevent said, "is in order that they may avoid me."

"What on earth do you mean?"

Old Fauchelevent gave an inimitable wink.

"Oh, Lord! there are only women in this house, and lots of girls. It seems that I should be a dangerous person to meet, and so the bell warns them; when I come, they go."

"What is this house?"

"Oh, nonsense! you know."

"Indeed, I do not."

"Why, you got me the gardener's place here."

"Answer me as if I knew nothing."

"Well, then, it is the Little Picpus Convent."

Jean Valjean's recollections returned to him. Chance, that is to say, Providence, had brought him to the very convent in the Quartier St. Antoine where Fauchelevent, after his accident, had been engaged on Madeleine's recommendation two years back.

He repeated, as if speaking to himself:—

“ Little Picpus! ”

“ But come, tell me,” Fauchelevent continued, “ how the deuce did you get in here, Father Madeleine? For though you are a saint, you are a man; and no men are admitted here.”

“ Why, you are here.”

“ Well, only I.”

“ And yet,” continued Valjean, “ I must remain.”

“ Oh, Lord! ” exclaimed Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean walked up to the gardener and said in a grave voice:—

“ Fauchelevent, I saved your life.”

“ I was the first to remember it,” answered Fauchelevent.

“ Well, you can do for me to-day what I once did for you.”

Fauchelevent took Jean Valjean’s muscular hands in his old wrinkled, and trembling ones, and for some seconds seemed unable to speak; at length he exclaimed:

“ Oh, it would be a blessing from Heaven if I could repay you a slight portion! Save your life! M. Madeleine, dispose of an old man as you please.”

A wonderful joy transfigured the aged gardener; his face was radiant.

“ What do you wish me to do? ” he continued.

“ I will explain. Have you a room? ”

“ I have a solitary cottage yonder, behind the ruins of the old convent, in a corner which no one visits. It has three rooms in it.”

“ Good! ” said Jean Valjean. “ Now, I will ask two things of you.”

“ What are they, Mr. Mayor? ”

“ First, that you will tell nobody what you know about me; and second, that you will not try to learn anything further.”

“ As you please. I know that you can do nothing but what is honest, and that you have ever been a man after

God's heart. And then, again, it was you who got me this situation, and I am at your service."

"Enough; now come with me, and we will go and fetch the child."

"Ah!" said Fauchelevent; "there is a child."

He did not add another word, but followed Valjean as a dog follows its master.

In less than half an hour, Cosette, who had become *rosy* again in the heat of a good fire, was asleep in the old gardener's bed. Valjean had put on his cravat and coat; the hat thrown over the wall had been found and picked up, and Fauchelevent took off his knee-cap and bell, which now hung on a nail together with a basket which adorned the wall. The two men were seated near the fire at a table on which Fauchelevent had placed a lump of cheese, black bread, a bottle of wine, and two glasses; and the old man said to Jean Valjean as he laid his hand on his knee:—

"Ah, Father Madeleine, you did not recognize me at first; you save people's lives and forget them afterward! Oh, that is wrong, for they remember you. You are an ungrateful man."

CHAPTER X

HOW JAVERT FOUND ONLY THE EMPTY NEST

THE events of which we have just seen the reverse, so to speak, had occurred in the simplest way possible.

When Jeal Valjean, on the night of the very day when Javert arrested him by Fantine's death-bed, broke out of M—— jail, the police supposed that the escaped convict must have gone to Paris. Paris is a maelstrom where everything is lost; and everything disappears in this centre of the world, as in the centre of the sea. No forest can conceal a man so well as that crowd; and fugitives of every de-

scription are aware of the fact. They go to Paris to be swallowed up, for that is at times a mode of safety. The police are aware of this too; and it is in Paris that they seek what they have lost elsewhere. They sought there the ex-mayor of M——, and Javert was summoned to assist in the search; and, in truth, he assisted powerfully in recapturing Valjean. The zeal and intelligence which he displayed on this occasion were observed by M. Chabouillet, secretary to the prefecture under Count Anglès; and this gentleman, who had already befriended Javert, had the police inspector of M—— attached to the police force of Paris. Here Javert proved himself variously and — let us say it, though the word seems inappropriate when applied to such services — honourably useful.

He thought no more of Jean Valjean — with those dogs ever on the hunt, the wolf of to-day causes the wolf of yesterday to be forgotten — until in December, 1823, he, who never read newspapers, read one. But Javert, who was a legitimist, was anxious to learn the details of the triumphal entry of the Prince Generalissimo into Bayonne. When he had finished the article which interested him, a name — the name of Jean Valjean — at the foot of a column attracted his attention. The newspaper announced that the convict Jean Valjean was dead, and published the fact in such formal terms that Javert did not doubt it. He musingly said, “That is a good thing,” then threw away the paper, and thought no more of it.

Some time after, it happened that a report was sent by the prefecture of Seine et Oise to the police of Paris concerning the abduction of a child which took place under peculiar circumstances in the parish of Montfermeil. A little girl of seven or eight years of age, who was intrusted by her mother to a publican in the town, had been stolen by a stranger. The child answered to the name of Cosette; and her mother was a certain Fantine, who had died in the hospital,— it was not known when or where. This report came under Javert’s eye, and set him thinking.

The name of Fantine was familiar to him; he remembered that Jean Valjean had made him laugh by asking for a respite of three days, to go and fetch this creature's child. He remembered that Valjean was arrested in Paris at the very moment when he was getting into the Montfermeil coach; and certain facts had led to the supposition at the time that he had taken a trip to the vicinity of the village on the previous day, for he had not been seen in the village itself. What was his business at Montfermeil? No one was able to guess; but Javert now understood it,—Fantine's daughter was there, and Jean Valjean had gone to fetch her. Now this child had just been stolen by a stranger; who could the stranger be? Could it be Jean Valjean?—but he was dead. Javert, without saying a word to anybody, took the coach from the Pewter Platter, and went off to Montfermeil.

Here he expected to gain a great deal of light on the subject, but found only a great obscurity.

At first the Thénardiers, in their vexation, had chattered, and the disappearance of the Lark produced a sensation in the village. There were several versions of the story, which finally settled down into an abduction; and hence the police report. Still, after he had gotten over his first outburst of temper, Thénardier, with his admirable instinct, very speedily comprehended that it is never advisable to stir up the authorities, and that his complaint in regard to the abduction of Cosette would have his primary result of fixing the sharp eye of justice upon himself, and upon many dark matters with which he was mixed up. The thing that owls least like is to have a candle brought to bear on them. And then, again, how could he explain the fifteen hundred francs which he had received? He stopped short, put a gag in his wife's mouth, and affected amazement when people spoke about "the stolen child." He did not at all understand; he had certainly complained at the first about his little darling being taken from him so suddenly; he should have liked to keep her for two or three

days longer out of affection; but her grandfather had come to fetch her in the most natural way in the world. He added "the grandfather," which produced a good effect; and it was this story upon which Javert hit when he reached Montfermeil. The grandfather caused Jean Valjean to fade out of memory.

Javert, however, drove a few questions like probes into Thénardier's story. "Who was this grandfather, and what was his name?" Thénardier answered simply, "He is a rich farmer. I saw his passport, and I believe his name was Guillaume Lambert."

Lambert is a respectable and most reassuring name, and so Javert returned to Paris.

"Valjean is really dead," he said to himself, "and I am an ass."

He was beginning to forget the whole affair again, when, in the course of March, 1824, he heard talk of a peculiar character who lived in the parish of St. Menard, and was nicknamed the "beggar who gives alms." This man was said to be a man of means, whose name no one knew exactly, and who lived alone with a little girl eight years of age, who knew nothing about herself, except that she came from Montfermeil. Montfermeil! That name was always turning up, and it made Javert prick up his ears. A begging old spy, an ex-beadle, to whom this person was very charitable, added a few more details. "He was a very timid person; he never went out till night; he spoke to nobody, except now and then to the poor; and he let no one approach him. He wore a horrible old yellow coat, which was worth several millions, as it was lined throughout with bank-notes. This decidedly piqued Javert's curiosity. In order to see this singular personage closer without startling him, he one day borrowed the beadle's rags and the place where the old spy crouched every evening, snuffing his orisons through his nose, and spying between his prayers.

"The suspicious individual" really came up to Javert,

thus travestied, and gave him alms. At that moment Javert raised his head, and the shock which Valjean received on fancying that he recognized Javert, Javert received on fancying that he recognized Valjean.

Still, the darkness might have deceived the officer; and Jean Valjean's death was official. Javert felt serious doubts, and when in doubt, Javert, a scrupulous man, never collared anybody.

He followed this man to No. 50-52, and made the old woman talk, which was no difficult task. She confirmed the fact of the coat lined with millions, and told her story about the thousand-franc note; she had seen it! she had felt it! Javert hired a room, and took possession of it that same night. He listened at the door of the mysterious lodger, in the hope of hearing his voice; but Jean Valjean saw his candle through the key-hole, and foiled the spy by holding his tongue.

On the next day Valjean decamped; but the noise of the five-franc piece which he let fall was noticed by the old woman, who, hearing the chink of coin, supposed that he was about to leave, and hastened to warn Javert. Hence when Valjean left the house at night, Javert was waiting for him behind the trees with two men.

Javert had requested assistance at the prefecture, but had not mentioned the name of the individual whom he hoped to seize.

That was his secret, and he kept it for three reasons: first, because the slightest indiscretion might give Jean Valjean the alarm; secondly, because to lay hands on an escaped convict, supposed to be dead, on a criminal whom Justice had already forever classed among "malefactors of the most dangerous sort," was a magnificent success, which the older policemen of Paris would certainly not leave to a newcomer like Javert, and he was afraid he might be robbed of his galley-slave; lastly, because Javert, having artistic tastes, was fond of anything unexpected. He hated those successes which are deflowered by being talked of a long

time beforehand, and he liked to elaborate his masterpieces in the darkness and to unveil them suddenly.

Javert followed Jean Valjean from tree to tree, then from street-corner to street-corner, and did not once take his eye off him; even when Valjean fancied himself the safest, Javert's eye was upon him. Why did Javert not arrest him? Because he was still in doubt.

It must be borne in mind that at this period the police were not exactly at their ease; the free press embarrassed them. A few arbitrary arrests, denounced by the newspapers, had found an echo in the Chambers, and rendered the Prefecture timid. Interference with individual liberty was a serious matter; the police agents were afraid of making a mistake, for the prefect held them responsible; and a mistake meant dismissal. Just imagine the effect which would be produced in Paris by the following short paragraph copied by twenty papers: "Yesterday, a white-haired, old grandfather, a respectable man of means, who was taking a walk with his granddaughter, eight years of age, was arrested and taken to the house of detention as an escaped convict."

Let us repeat also that Javert had scruples of his own; the warnings of his conscience were added to those of the prefect, and he really doubted.

Jean Valjean's back was turned to him; he was walking in the dark; sorrow, anxiety, despondency, the fresh misfortune of being compelled to escape by night, to seek a chance refuge for Cosette and himself in Paris, the necessity of regulating his pace to that of a child,— all this had unconsciously changed Valjean's demeanor, and imparted to him such senility, that the very police incarnate in Javert might be deceived, and was deceived. The impossibility of approaching very close, his attire as an old emigrant tutor, Thénardier's statement which made him out a grandpapa, and, lastly, the belief in his death at the galleys, added to the uncertainty which clouded Javert's mind.

For a moment he thought of suddenly asking for his

papers; but if the man were not Jean Valjean, and if he were not some good old fellow living on his income, he was, in all probability, some scamp deeply entangled in the meshes of Parisian crime; some leader of a band, who gave alms to hide his other talents,—which is an old dodge,—and who had his “pals,” his accomplices, and his lurking-places, where he could conceal himself in an emergency. The many turns which this man made through the streets seemed to indicate that all was not quite right with him. To arrest him too quickly would be “to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.” Where was the harm of waiting? Javert felt quite certain that his victim could not escape.

He walked along, therefore, in great perplexity, asking himself a hundred questions about this enigmatical personage.

It was not till some time after that he decidedly recognized Jean Valjean in the Rue Pontoise, by the brilliant light which streamed from a wine-shop.

There are only two beings in the world that thrill profoundly,—a mother who recovers her child, and the tiger that recovers its prey; but Javert felt the same thrill.

So soon as he had positively recognized Jean Valjean, the terrible convict, he perceived that he had but two companions, and asked for reinforcements at the police office in the Rue Pontoise. Before catching hold of a thorn-bush, people put on gloves.

This delay and the halt at Rollin Square to arrange with his agents, all but made him lose the trail; but he quickly guessed that Jean Valjean would wish to place the river between himself and his pursuers. He bent his head and reflected, like a blood-hound putting its nose to the ground to lift the scent. Then, with his powerful correctness of instinct, he went straight to the Austerlitz bridge. A word with the toll-collector put him on the track. “Have you seen a man with a little girl?” “I made him pay two sous,” the collector answered. Javert reached the bridge just in time to see Valjean lead Cosette across the moonlit

square; he saw him enter the Rue du Chemin Vert St. Antoine. He thought of the blind alley arranged there like a trap, and the sole issue from it by Little Rue Picpus; and in order to "stop the earth," as sportsmen say, he hastily sent off a policeman by a round-about way, to guard the issue. A patrol, which was returning to the Arsenal, happening to pass, he requested its assistance; for in such games as this, soldiers are trumps, and, moreover, it is a principle that, in forcing a boar from its lair, the hunter must have a knowledge of venery, and must have a strong pack of hounds.

These arrangements made, feeling that Jean Valjean was caught between the blind alley on the right, his own agent on the left, and himself in the rear, Javert took a pinch of snuff.

Then he began to play, and enjoyed a delicious and infernal moment. He allowed his man to go before him, knowing that he had him safe, but desiring to defer the moment of arrest as long as possible; delighted to feel that he was caught, and yet to see him free; watching him with the pleasure of the spider that lets the fly flutter for a while, and the cat that lets the mouse run. The claw and the talon have a monstrous sensuality,—namely, the fluttering motions of the animal imprisoned in their pincers; what a delight this strangling is!

Javert was enjoying himself; the meshes of his net were strong, he was certain of success, and now he only needed to close his hand.

Accompanied as he was, the idea of resistance was impossible, however energetic, vigorous, and desperate Jean Valjean might be.

Javert advanced slowly, examining and searching as he passed, every corner of the street, like the pockets of a thief; but when he reached the centre of the web, he did not find his fly.

His exasperation may be imagined.

He questioned his sentinel of the Rue Droit-mur and the

Little Rue Picpus, but he quietly declared that he had not seen the man pass.

It sometimes happens that a stag will escape with the pack at its very heels, and in such cases the oldest huntsmen know not what to say. In a disappointment of this nature, Artonge exclaimed, "It is not a stag, but a sorcerer."

Javert would gladly have uttered the same cry, for his disappointment was midway between despair and fury.

It is certain that errors were committed by Napoleon in the Russian war, by Alexander in the Indian war, by Cæsar in his African war, by Cyrus in the Scythian war, and by Javert in his campaign against Jean Valjean. He was perhaps wrong in hesitating to recognize the ex-galley slave, for a glance should have been sufficient for him. He was wrong in not arresting him purely and simply at No. 50-52. He was wrong in not arresting him when he positively recognized him in the Rue Pontoise. He was wrong to consult with his colleagues in the bright moonlight, although advice is certainly useful, and it is as well to interrogate those dogs who deserve credence. But the hunter cannot take too many precautions when he is following restless animals, like the wolf and the convict; and Javert, by displaying too much anxiety in setting the bloodhounds on the track, alarmed his game and started it off. Above all, he was wrong, on recovering the trail at the Austerlitz bridge, to play the dangerous and foolish trick of holding such a man at the end of a string. He fancied himself stronger than he really was, and that he could play with the lion as if it were a mouse. At the same time, he imagined himself too weak when he fancied that he must procure help; it was a fatal precaution and the loss of precious time. Javert committed all these blunders; but for all that, he was none the less one of the cleverest and most correct spies that ever existed. He was, in the full acceptation of the term, what in venery is called a "knowing dog;" but where is the man who is perfect?

Great strategists have their eclipses.

Great follies are often made, like stout ropes, of a multitude of strands. Take the cable, thread by thread, take all the petty, determining motives separately, and you can break them one after the other, and say to yourself, "It is only that;" but braid them, twist them together, and the result is enormous. It is Attila hesitating between Marcian in the East and Valentinian in the West; it is Hannibal delaying at Capua; it is Danton falling asleep at Arcis-sur-Aube.

However this may be, even when Javert perceived that Jean Valjean had slipped from his clutches, he did not lose his head. Certain that the convict could not be very far off, he established watches, organized traps and ambuscades; and beat up the quarter the whole night through. The first thing he saw was the cut cord of the street-lantern. This was a valuable sign, which, however, led him astray so far that it made him turn all his attention to the blind alley. There are in this alley low walls, surrounding gardens which skirt open fields, and Jean Valjean had evidently fled in that direction. The truth is, that if he had gone a little farther down the blind alley he would, in all probability, have done so, and have been a lost man.

Javert explored the gardens and fields as if looking for a needle; and at daybreak he left two intelligent men on duty, and returned to the police station, looking as hang-dog as a spy captured by a robber.

BOOK VI

LITTLE PICPUS

CHAPTER I

NO. 62, RUE PICPUS

HALF a century ago, nothing more resembled any ordinary carriage entrance than the carriage entrance of No. 62, Little Rue Picpus. This door, generally standing half open in the most inviting manner, allowed you to see two things, neither of which is of a very mournful nature,—a courtyard with walls covered with vines, and the face of a lounging porter. Above the wall at the end of the court rose tall trees; and when a sunbeam enlivened the yard, and a glass of wine had enlivened the porter, it was difficult to pass No. 62 without carrying away a pleasant impression. And yet you had caught a glimpse of a very gloomy place.

The threshold smiled, but the house prayed and wept.

If you succeeded, which was not easy, in passing the porter,—it was, indeed, impossible to nearly every one, for there was an “Open Sesame,” which it was necessary to know,—you entered a small hall to the right, out of which opened a staircase enclosed between two walls, and so narrow that only one person could go up at a time; if you were not frightened by the canary-coloured plaster and chocolate wainscot of this staircase, and still ventured to ascend, you crossed two landings and found yourself in a passage on the

first-floor, where the yellow distemper and chocolate dado followed you with quiet pertinacity. The staircase and passage were lighted by two fine windows; but the passage soon took a turn and became dark. When you had doubled this cape, you found yourself before a door, which was the more mysterious because it was not closed. You pushed it open, and found yourself in a small room about six feet square, tiled, well scrubbed, clean, and cold, and hung with a yellow-green sprigged paper, at fifteen sous the roll. A pale, white light came through a large window with small panes, on the left, which occupied the whole width of the room. You looked about, but saw nobody; you listened, but heard neither a footstep nor a human sound. The walls were bare and the room unfurnished; there was not even a chair.

You looked again, and saw in the wall facing the door a square hole, covered with a black, knotted, substantial, cross-barred grating, which formed diamonds—I had almost written meshes—less than an inch and a half across. The little green sprigs on the yellow paper came right up to these bars, in a calm and orderly way, and the funereal contact did not make them start or wither. Even supposing that any human being had been so wondrously thin as to attempt to go in or out by the square hole, the bars would have prevented him; but, though they did not let the body pass, the eyes—that is to say the mind—could do so. It seemed as if this had been considered, for it was lined with a tin plate pierced with thousands of holes more microscopic than those of a strainer. Beneath this plate was an opening exactly like the mouth of a letter-box, and a bell-wire hung by the side of this hole.

If you pulled this wire, a bell tinkled, and you heard a voice close to you, which made you start.

“Who is there?” the voice asked.

It was a woman’s voice, a gentle voice,—so gentle that it was melancholy.

Here, again, there was a magic word which it was neces-

sary to know; if you did not know it, the voice ceased, and the wall became silent again, as if the terrified darkness of the tomb were on the other side.

If you knew the password, the voice continued,—“ Turn to the right.”

You then noticed on the right, facing the window, a door, the upper part of which was of glass, painted gray. You raised the latch, walked in, and experienced precisely the same impression as when you enter a box at the theatre, before the gilt grating has been lowered and the chandelier lighted. You were, in fact, in a sort of theatre-box, scarce lighted by the faint light that came through the glass door, narrow, furnished with two old chairs and a ragged straw matting,—a regular box with a black wooden ledge just high enough to lean upon. This box had a grating, but it was not gilded wood as at the opera; it was a monstrous trellis-work of frightfully interlaced iron bars, fastened to the wall by enormous clamps that resemble clenched fists.

When the first few moments were past, and your eye began to grow accustomed to this cellar-like gloom, you tried to look through the grating, but could not see more than six inches beyond it; there it encountered a barrier of black shutters, reinforced and strengthened by cross-beams of wood painted a ginger bread yellow. These shutters were jointed, divided into long, narrow slats, and they covered the whole width of the grating; they were always closed.

At the expiration of a few minutes, you heard a voice calling to you from behind the shutters, and saying,—

“ I am here. What do you want?”

It might be a loved voice, perhaps an adored voice, but you saw nobody, and could scarce hear the sound of a breath. It seemed as if a spirit had been evoked, and addressed you through the walls of a tomb.

If you fulfilled certain prescribed and very difficult conditions, the slats of one of the shutters opened opposite you, and the spirit which you had evoked became an apparition. Behind the grating, behind the shutter, you perceived, as

far as the grating would allow, a head, of which you saw only the mouth and chin; for the rest was covered by a black veil. You caught a glimpse of a black wimple and of a dim form, covered by a black pall. This head spoke to you, but did not look at you, and never smiled.

The light which came from behind you was so arranged that you saw her in the light, and she saw you in darkness; this light was symbolic.

Nevertheless, your eyes plunged eagerly through that opening into the place closed against all glances. A profound vagueness surrounded that form clothed in mourning. Your eyes searched this vagueness, and tried to distinguish the surroundings of the apparition; but in a very little time you perceived that you could see nothing. What you saw was night, emptiness, gloom; a wintry mist mingled with a vapour from the tomb; a sort of terrific peace; a silence in which nothing could be heard, not even sighs; a shadow in which nothing could be distinguished, not even phantoms.

What you saw was the interior of a nunnery.

It was the interior of that severe and gloomy house known as the Convent of the Perpetual Adoration. The box in which you found yourself was the parlour; and the first voice that addressed you was that of a lay sister, who always sat silent and motionless on the other side of the wall, near the square opening, which was screened by the iron grating and the tin plate with its thousand holes as by a double visor.

The obscurity in which the grated box was plunged resulted from the fact that the parlour, which had a window on the side of the world, had none on the side of the convent; profane eyes must not see any portion of that sacred spot.

And yet there was something beyond the shadow. There was a light; there was life amid that death. Although this convent was the most strictly immured of all convents, we will try to enter it, to take the reader with us, and to describe, with due regard to decorum, things which novelists have never seen, and consequently never recorded.

CHAPTER II

THE ORDER OF MARTIN VERGA

THIS convent, which had existed for many years prior to 1824, in the Little Rue Picpus, was a community of Cistercians belonging to the order of Martin Verga.

These Cistercians were not attached to Clairvaux, like the Cistercian monks, but to Citeaux, like the Benedictines. In other words, they were the subjects, not of St. Bernard, but of St. Benedict.

Any one who has ever turned over old folios knows that Martin Verga founded, in 1425, a congregation of Cistercian-Benedictines, whose headquarters were at Salamanca, and of which Alcala was an offshoot. This order sent out branches through all the Catholic countries of Europe.

Such a grafting of one order upon another is not at all unusual in the Latin Church. If we confine our attention merely to the Order of St. Benedict, we find four congregations attached to it, besides the rule of Martin Verga; in Italy two,—Monte Cassino and St. Justina of Padua; two in France,—Cluny and St. Maur; and nine orders,—Val-lombrosa, Grammont, the Celestines, the Calmalduli, the Carthusians, the Humiliated, the Olivateurs, the Silverstrines, and, lastly, Citeaux; for Citeaux itself, while a trunk for other orders, is only a branch of St. Benedict. Citeaux dates from Saint Robert, abbot of Molesmes, in the diocese of Langres, in 1098. Now, it was in 529 that the Devil, who had retired to the desert of Subiaco (he was old; did he turn hermit?), was expelled from the temple of Apollo, in which he resided, by Saint Benedict, a youth of seventeen.

Next to the order of the Carmelites, who go barefoot, wear a bit of willow at their throat, and never sit down, the harshest order is that of the Cistercian-Benedictines of Martin Verga. They are dressed in black, with a wimple which,

by the express order of Saint Benedict, comes up to the chin. A serge gown with wide sleeves, a large woollen veil, the wimple, which mounts to the chin, cut square on the breast, and a coif, which comes down to their eyes,— such is their dress. All is black, except the coif, which is white, Novices wear the same garb, but all white; while professed nuns also wear a rosary at their side.

The Cistercian-Benedictines of Martin Verga practise the Perpetual Adoration, like those Benedictines called “Ladies of the Holy Sacrament,” who, at the beginning of this century, had two houses in Paris,— one in the Temple, the other in the Rue Neuve St. Geneviève. In other respects the nuns of the Little Picpus, to whom we refer, differ entirely from the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament; there were numerous differences in the rule as well as in the dress. The nuns of Little Picpus wore a black wimple, the latter a white one, and had also on their breast a Holy Sacrament, about three inches long, of silver gilt or gilt copper. The nuns of the Little Picpus did not wear this decoration. The Perpetual Adoration, while common to Little Picpus and the Temple House, leaves the two orders perfectly distinct. This practice is the only resemblance between the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament and the Cistercians of Martin Verga, just as there was a similarity in the study and glorification of all the mysteries attaching to the infancy, life, and death of the Saviour and the Virgin, between two orders which were, nevertheless, widely separated and at times hostile,— the Oratory of Italy, established at Florence by Saint Philip Neri, and the Oratory of France, established in Paris by Pierre de Bérulle. The Paris Oratory claimed precedence because Philip Neri was only a saint, while Bérulle was a cardinal.

But to return to the harsh Spanish rule of Martin Verga.

The Cistercian-Benedictines of this order abstain from meat the whole year round; fast in Lent, and on many other days, special to themselves; rise from their first sleep, from one to three in the morning, to read their breviary and chant

matins; sleep between serge sheets and on straw at all seasons; never bathe or light a fire; scourge themselves every Friday; observe the rule of silence; speak only during recreation hours, which are very short; and wear coarse flannel chemises for six months,—from September 14, which is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, up to Easter. These six months are a modification. The rule says all the year; but the flannel chemise, intolerable in the heat of summer, produced fevers and nervous spasms. Even with this relief, when the nuns put on the flannel chemise on September 14, they suffer from fever for three or four days. Obedience, poverty, chastity, perseverance in their seclusion,—such are their vows, which are greatly aggravated by the rule.

The prioress is elected for three years by mothers, called "Vocal Mothers" because they have a voice in the chapter. She can be re-elected only twice, which fixes the longest possible reign of a prioress at nine years.

They never see the officiating priest, who is hidden from them by a green baize curtain nine feet long. During the sermon, when the preacher is in the chapel, they draw their veils over their faces; they must always speak low, and walk with their eyes fixed on the ground and their heads bowed. Only one man is allowed to enter the convent,—the diocesan archbishop.

There is certainly another,—the gardener; but he is always an aged man. And in order that he may be constantly alone in the garden, and that the nuns may avoid him, a bell is fastened to his knee. The nuns must display absolute and passive submission to the prioress, and it is the canonical subjection in all its self-denial. They must obey as if it were the voice of Christ,—*ut voci Christi*; at a nod, at the first signal,—*ad nutum, ad primum signum*; at once, cheerfully, perseveringly, and with a certain bland obedience,—*prompté, hilariter, perseveranter, et cæcâ quâdam obedientiâ*; like the file in the hand of the workman,—*quasi limam in manibus fabri*; and are not allowed to read or

write without express permission,— *legere vel scribere non ediscerit sine expressâ superioris licentiâ.*

Each of them in turn makes what they call “reparation.” This reparation is a prayer for all the sins, faults, irregularities, violations, iniquities, and crimes committed upon earth. For twelve consecutive hours,— from four in the afternoon till four the next morning, or from four in the morning until four in the afternoon,— the sister who makes reparation remains on her knees, on the stone before the Holy Sacrament, with her hands clasped and a rope around her neck. When her fatigue becomes unendurable, she prostrates herself with her face on the ground, and her arms forming a cross,— that is her sole relief. In this attitude she prays for all the guilty in the world; it is a grand, a sublime idea.

As this act is accomplished in front of a post on the top of which a wax candle burns, it is called either “making reparation,” or “being at the stake.” The nuns, through humility, prefer the latter expression, which contains an idea of torture and abasement.

Making reparation is a function which absorbs the whole soul; the sister at the stake would not turn were a thunderbolt to fall behind her.

Moreover, there is always a nun on her knees before the Holy Sacrament; this station lasts an hour, and they relieve each other like sentries. This is the Perpetual Adoration.

The prioress and the mothers nearly all have names marked by peculiar solemnity, recalling, not saints and martyrs, but incidents in the life of the Saviour,— such as Mother Nativity, Mother Conception, Mother Presentation, and Mother Passion; still, the names of saints are not forbidden.

When you see them, you never see more of them than their mouth.

They all have yellow teeth, for a tooth-brush never enters the convent. Brushing the teeth is the top rung of the ladder, at the foot of which is “the loss of the soul.”

They never say “mine;” they have nothing of their

own, and must not attach themselves to anything. They say of everything "ours :" thus, our veil, our beads ; if they were to allude to their chemise, they would say "our chemise." Sometimes they become attached to some trifling object,—a book of hours, a relic, or a consecrated medal ; but so soon as they perceive that they are beginning to grow fond of it, they must give it away. They remember the remark of Saint Theresa, to whom a great lady said, when she entered her order, " Allow me, holy mother, to send for a Bible to which I am greatly attached." " Ah, you are still attached to something ! In that case, do not enter our order."

No one must lock herself in under any pretence, or have *a room of her own*. They live with open doors. When they meet, one says, " Praised and adored be the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar !" and the other answers, " Forever ." There is the same ceremony when one sister raps at another sister's door ; the door has scarce been touched, ere a gentle voice is heard saying hurriedly from within, " Forever ." Like all practices, this becomes mechanical by dint of habit ; and a sister will sometimes say " Forever " before the other has had time to utter the long sentence, " Praised and adored be the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar ! "

Among the Visitants, the one who enters says, " Hail Mary," to which the other replies, " Full of Grace ; " this is their greeting, which is truly full of grace.

At each hour of the day, three supplementary strokes sound from the chapel bell ; and at this signal, prioress, vocal mothers, professed nuns, lay sisters, novices, and postulants break off what they are saying, doing, or thinking, and all repeat in unison,—if it be five o'clock, for instance,—" At five o'clock, and at every hour, may the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar be praised and adored," and so on, according to the hour.

This custom, which is intended to break the thread of thought and ever lead it back to God, exists in many communities, the form alone varying. Thus, at The Infant

Jesus, they say, "At the present hour, and at every hour, may the love of Jesus inflame my heart!"

The Cistercian-Benedictines of Martin Verga, cloistered fifty years ago at Little Picpus, sing the offices to a solemn psalmody, a pure Gregorian chant, and always in a loud voice, during the whole of the service. Whenever there is an asterisk in the missal, they pause, and say in a low voice, "Jesus, Mary, Joseph." In the service for the dead they adopt such a deep note that female voices can scarce descend to it, and the result is striking and tragic in its effect.

The sisters of Little Picpus had a vault made under their high altar for the burial of their community; but "The Government," as they call it, would not allow coffins to be placed in this vault, and the sisters therefore leave the convent when they die. This afflicts and alarms them as an infraction of the rule.

They obtained a slight consolation,—permission to be buried at a special hour and in a special corner of the old Vaugirard cemetery, which was established in a field that had once belonged to their community.

On Thursday these nuns attend high mass, vespers, and all the offices, as on Sunday; and they also scrupulously observe all the little festivals unknown to persons of the world, of which the Church was formerly so prodigal in France, and still remains so in Spain and Italy. Their stations in the chapels are innumerable; and as for the number and length of their prayers, we cannot give a better idea than by quoting the ingenuous remark of one of them: "The prayers of the postulants are frightful, those of the novices worse, and those of the professed nuns worse still."

One a week the chapter meets, the prioress presiding and the vocal mothers assisting. Each sister kneels in turn on the stone floor, and confesses aloud, in the presence of all, the faults and sins which she has committed during the week. The vocal mothers consult after each confession, and inflict the penance aloud.

In addition to this confession aloud, which is reserved for

serious faults, they have for venial faults what they call *culpa*. The penitent prostrates herself on her face during service in front of the prioress, who is never addressed otherwise than as "Our Mother," until the latter notifies the victim, by a slight tap on the arm of her stall, that she may rise. The nuns perform this penance for very trivial things; breaking a glass, tearing a veil, an involuntary delay of a few seconds in attending service, a false note in chapel, that is enough. This penance is quite voluntary, and the culprit (this word is etymologically in its place here) judges and sentences herself. On festivals and Sundays there are four mother precentors, who chant the offices at a large lectern with four stalls. One day a mother precentor intoned a psalm, which began with the word *Ecce*, and said instead, quite loud, *ut, si, sol*; and for this absence of mind she underwent a penance which lasted throughout the whole service. What rendered the fault enormous was the fact that the chapter laughed.

When a nun is summoned to the parlour, even if she be the prioress herself, she pulls down her veil in such a way as to show only her mouth.

The prioress alone can communicate with strangers; the others may see only their nearest relatives, and that very rarely. If by chance a person from the outer world requests to see a nun whom she has formerly known or loved, a lengthy negotiation is required. If it be a woman, permission possibly may be granted. The nun comes, and is addressed through the shutters, which are opened only for a mother or a sister. We need hardly say that permission is never granted to men.

Such is the rule of St. Benedict, aggravated by Martin Verga.

These nuns are not gay, rosy, and fresh, as the daughters of other orders sometimes are; they are pale and serious, and between 1825 and 1830 three of them went mad.

CHAPTER III

SEVERITIES

ANY one desirous of joining the community of Martin Verga must be a postulant for at least two years (sometimes four), and four years a novice. It is rare for the final vows to be taken before the age of twenty-three or twenty-four. The Cistercian-Benedictines of Martin Verga admit no widows to their order.

In their cells they undergo many strange macerations, of which they are not allowed to speak.

On the day when a novice professes, she is dressed in her best clothes, wears a wreath of white roses, has her hair curled and then prostrates herself; a large black veil is thrown over her, and the service for the dead is performed. Then the nuns divide into two files, one of which passes her, saying in plaintive tones, "Our sister is dead;" and the other answers triumphantly, "She lives in Jesus Christ."

At the time when this story took place, there was a boarding-school attached to the convent, the pupils being young ladies of noble birth, and generally rich. Among them were M^{es}. de Ste. Aulaire and de Bélisseu, and an English girl, bearing the illustrious Catholic name of Talbot. These young ladies, educated between four walls by the nuns, grew up with a horror of the world and of the age; one of them said to us one day, "To see the street pavement made me shudder from head to foot." They were dressed in blue with a white cap, and a plated or copper gilt Holy Ghost on the breast. On certain high festivals, especially St. Martha's Day, they were allowed, as a high favour and supreme happiness, to dress themselves like nuns and to perform the offices and practices of St. Benedict for a whole day. In early times the nuns lent them their black robes; but this was deemed a profanity, and the prioress

forbade it, so the novices alone were permitted to make such loans. It is remarkable that these performances, doubtless tolerated in the convent and encouraged through a secret spirit of proselytism, and in order to give the children a fore-taste of the sacred habit, were a real happiness and a true recreation for the boarders. They were amused; "it was a novelty, and gave them a change,"—candid reasons of children, which do not succeed, however, in making us worldly-minded people understand the felicity of holding a holy-water brush in one's hand, and standing for hours before a lectern, singing quartets.

The pupils conformed to all the practices of the convent, though not to all the austeries. We know a young lady who, after returning to the world, and after being married for some years, could not break herself of the habit of saying hastily whenever there was a rap at the door, "Forever!" Like the nuns, the boarders saw only their parents, and in the parlour; their mothers themselves were not allowed to kiss them. To show how far this severity was carried, a young girl was visited one day by her mother, accompanied by a little sister three years of age. The girl cried because she wanted to kiss her sister; but it was impossible. She implored at least permission for the child to pass her hand through the bars, so that she might kiss it; but this was refused as almost a scandal.

CHAPTER IV

GAYETIES

FOR all this, though, these young girls filled the grave house with delightful reminiscences.

At certain hours, childhood sparkled in that cloister. The bell for recreation rang, the gate creaked on its hinges, and

the birds whispered one to another, "Good! here are the children." An irruption of youth inundated the garden, intersected with a cross, like a shroud. Radiant faces, white foreheads, ingenuous eyes, full of gay light,—all sorts of dawn,—spread through the shadows. After the psalm-singing, the bell-ringing, and the services, the noise of girls, softer than the hum of bees, suddenly burst forth. The hive of joy was opened, and each brought her honey. They played, they called to each other, they formed groups, they ran about. Pretty little white teeth chattered in corners. In the distance, veils watched the laughter, shadows guarded the sunbeams,—but what matter! They beamed and they laughed. Those four mournful walls had their moment of dazzling brilliancy; vaguely brightened by the reflection of so much joy, they watched this sweet flight of the swarm. It was like a shower of roses falling on that house of mourning. The girls sported beneath the eyes of the nuns, for the glance of impeccability does not disturb innocence; and, thanks to these children, there was one hour of simple enjoyment among so many austere hours. The little girls jumped about and the older ones danced. In that cloister, play was mingled with heaven. Nothing could be more ravishing and more august than the fresh, innocent expansion of these childish souls. Homer danced there with Perrault; and there were in that black garden youth, health, noise, cries, pleasure, and happiness enough to unwrinkle the brows of all the ancestry, of both the epic poem and the fairy-tale, of the throne and the cottage, from Hecuba down to Mother Goose.

In this house, more frequently perhaps than elsewhere, those childish remarks were made which possess so much grace, and which make the hearer laugh thoughtfully. It was within these four gloomy walls that a child of four years of age one day exclaimed, "Mother, a grown-up girl has just told me that I have only nine years and ten months longer to remain here. What happiness!"

Here, too, it was that this memorable dialogue took place.

A Vocal Mother: "Why are you crying, my child?"

The Child (six years old), sobbing: "I told Alix that I knew my French history. She says that I don't know it, but I do."

Alix, the big girl (just nine): "No. She does not know it."

The Mother: "How so, my child?"

Alix: "She told me to open the book haphazard, and ask her a question out of the book, and she would answer it." "Well?"

"She did not answer it."

"What did you ask her?"

"I opened the book as she said, and I asked her the first question that I came across."

"And pray what was the question?"

"It was '*And what happened next?*'"

It was here that the profound observation was made about a rather dainty parrot which belonged to a lady boarder. "How well bred it is! It eats the top of the slice of bread and butter, just like a lady."

On one of the flag-stones of this cloister was also picked up the following confession, written beforehand, so as not to forget it, by a little sinner of seven years of age.

"Father, I accuse myself of avarice.

"Father, I accuse myself of having committed adultery.

"Father, I accuse myself of having raised my eyes to gentlemen."

It was on one of the benches in this garden that the following fable was improvised by rosy lips six years of age, and was listened to by blue eyes of four and five years.

"There were three little cocks, who lived in a place where there were many flowers. They picked the flowers and put them in their pockets. After that they plucked the leaves and put them in their playthings. There was a wolf in those parts, and there was a great deal of wood; and the wolf was in the wood, and he ate all the little cocks."

And this other poem:—

“There came a blow from a stick.

“Punchinello gave it to the cat.

“It did her no good; it only did her harm.

“Then a lady put Punchinello in prison.”

It was here, too, that the following sweet and affecting remark was made by a foundling child whom the convent was bringing up out of charity. She heard the others speaking of their mothers, and she murmured in her corner, “My mother was not there when I was born.”

There was a fat portress who was continually hurrying along the passage with her bunch of keys, and whose name was Sister Agatha. *The big, big girls*,—those over ten years of age,—called her Agathokeys.

The refectory, a large, square room, lighted only from a vaulted cloister on a level with the garden, was dark and damp, and, as children say, “full of creatures.” All the surrounding places furnished their contingent of insects.

Each of the four corners had a private and expressive name, in the language of the boarders. There was Spider corner, Caterpillar corner, Wood-louse corner, and Cricket corner. The latter was near the kitchen, and highly esteemed, for it was warmer there than elsewhere. The names passed from the refectory to the school-room, and served to distinguish four nations, as in the old Mazarin College. Every boarder belonged to one or other of these nations, according to the corner of the refectory in which she sat at meals. One day the archbishop, while paying a pastoral visit, saw a charming little rosy-faced girl, with glorious light hair, enter the class-room which he was examining, and he asked another boarder, a pretty brunette with pink cheeks, who stood near him:—

“Who is that?”

“She is a spider, sir.”

“Nonsense; and that other?”

“Is a cricket.”

“And this one?”

“A caterpillar.”

“Indeed! and what may you be?”

“I am a wood-louse, Monseigneur.”

Every house of this nature has its peculiarities. At the beginning of this century, Ecouen was one of those strict and gracious places where the childhood of young girls is passed in an almost august gloom. At Ecouen a distinction was made between the “virgins” and the “flower-girls,” in taking rank in the procession of the Holy Sacrament. There were also the “canopies” and the “censers,”—the former holding the cords of the canopy, and the latter swinging censers before the Holy Sacrament, while four virgins walked in front. On the morning of the great day it was not unusual to hear a girl ask in the dormitory, “Who is a virgin?”

Madame Campan mentions a remark made by a “little girl” of seven to a “big girl” of sixteen, who walked at the head of the procession, while she, the little one, remained behind: “You are a virgin, but I am not.”

CHAPTER V

AMUSEMENTS

ABOVE the refectory door was painted in large black letters the following prayer, which was called the “White Paternoster,” and which had the virtue of leading persons straight to paradise.

“Little white Paternoster, which God made, which God said, which God placed in Paradise. At night, when I went to bed, I found three angels at my bed,—one at the foot, two at the head, and the good Virgin Mary in the middle,—who told me to go to bed and fear nothing. The good God is my father, the good Virgin is my mother, the three apostles are my brothers, the three virgins are my sisters. My body is wrapped in the shirt in which God was born; the cross of Saint Margaret is written on my breast. The Blessed Virgin, weeping for

the Lord, went into the fields, and there met Saint John. ‘Saint John, whence come you?’ ‘I come from *Ave Salus.*’ ‘Have you not seen the Lord?’ ‘He is on the tree of the Cross with hanging feet, nailed hands, and a little hat of white thorns on his head.’ Whosoever repeats this, thrice at night and thrice in the morning, shall win Paradise at last.”¹

In 1827, this characteristic orison had disappeared beneath a triple coat of whitewash, and now it is almost effaced from the memory of those who were young girls then, and are old women now.

A large crucifix fastened to the wall completed the decoration of this refectory, whose only door opened on the garden. Two narrow tables, with wooden benches on each side, formed long parallel lines from one end of the refectory to the other. The walls were white, the tables black; for these two mourning colours are the sole variations in convents. The meals were poor, and the food of even the children scanty; a single plate of meat and vegetables, or salt-fish, was the height of luxury. This meagre fare, reserved for the boarders alone, was, however, an exception. The children ate and held their tongues, under the guardianship of the mother of the week, who, from time to time, if a fly dared to move or buzz contrary to regulation, noisily opened and closed a wooden book. This silence was seasoned with the “Lives of the Saints,” read aloud from a little desk standing at the foot of the crucifix, the reader being one

¹ This Paternoster is so curious that I have thought it better to quote the original.

“Petite Paternotre blanche, que Dieu dit, que Dieu fit, que Dieu mit en paradis. Au soir, m'allant coucher, je trouvis (*sic*) trois anges à mon lit coucher, un aux pieds, deux au chevet, la bonne Vierge Marie au milieu, qui me dit que je m'y couchis, qui rien ne doutis. Le bon Dieu est mon père, la bonne Vierge est ma mère, les trois apôtres sont mes frères, les trois vierges sont mes sœurs. La chemise où Dieu fut né mon corps en est enveloppé; la Croix Sainte Marguerite à ma poitrine est écrite. Madame la Vierge s'en va sur les champs, Dieu pleurant, reconnaît M. Saint Jean. ‘Monsieur Saint Jean, d'où venez-vous?’ ‘Je viens d'*Ave Salus.*’ ‘Vous n'avez vu le bon Dieu, si est?’ ‘Il est dans l'arbre de la Croix, les pieds pendans, les mains closans, un petit chapeau d'épine blanche sur la tête.’ Qui la dira trois fois au soir, trois fois au matin gagnera le paradis à la fin.”

of the big pupils, appointed for the week. At regular intervals on the bare table there were glazed earthen bowls, in which the pupils themselves washed their cups and forks and spoons, and sometimes threw a scrap of tough meat or spoiled fish; but this was severely punished.

Any child who broke the silence made a cross with her tongue. Where? On the ground,—she licked the stones. Dust, that finale of all joys, was charged with the chastisement of those poor little roseleaves that were guilty of prat-tling.

There was in the convent a book of which *only one copy* was ever printed, and which no one was allowed to read. It was the "Rue of St. Benedict,"—a mystery which no profane eye must penetrate. "Nemo regulas seu constitutiones nostras externas communicabit."

One day the boarders succeeded in getting hold of this book and began to peruse it eagerly, though frequently interrupted by fear of being surprised, which made them close the book hurriedly. They only derived a slight amount of pleasure from the danger thus incurred; for the "most interesting" portion was certain unintelligible pages about the sins of young boys.

They played in a garden walk, bordered by a few stunted fruit-trees. In spite of the extreme watchfulness and the severity of the punishments administered, when the wind shook the trees they sometimes succeeded in furtively picking up a green apple, or a spoiled apricot, or a wasp-inhabited pear. I will here let a letter speak which I have before me,—a letter written five-and-twenty years ago, by a former pupil, who is now the Duchess of —, and one of the most elegant women in Paris. I quote exactly: "We hide our pear or our apple, as we can. When we go up to lay our veil on the bed before supper, we stuff it under the pillow, and eat it at night in bed; and when that is not possible, we eat it in the closet." This was one of their liveliest pleasures.

On one occasion, when the archbishop was paying a visit

at the convent, one of the young ladies, Mademoiselle Bouchard, who was related to the Montmorencys, laid a wager that she would ask him for a holiday,—an enormity in such an austere community. The wager was taken; but not one of those who took her up, believed that she would do it. When the moment came, and the archbishop passed before the boarders, Mademoiselle Bouchard, to the indescribable horror of her companions, stepped out of the ranks and said, “*Monseigneur, a holiday.*” Mademoiselle Bouchard was tall and blooming, and had the prettiest pink-and-white face in the world. M. de Quélen smiled, and said, “What, my dear child, a day’s holiday! Three, if you like. I grant you three days.” The prioress could do nothing, as the archbishop had said it. It was a scandal for the convent, but a joy for the boarding-school. Just imagine the effect.

This harsh convent, however, was not so well walled in but that the passions of the outer world, the dramas, and even the romance of life, entered it. To prove this, we will briefly describe a real and incontestable fact, though it is in no way connected with the story which we are narrating. We mention the fact in order to complete the physiognomy of the convent in the reader’s mind.

About this period, then, there was in the convent a mysterious personage who was not a nun, but was treated with great respect, and called Madame Albertine. Nothing was known about her except that she was mad, and that in the world she was supposed to be dead. It was said that behind this history were certain monetary arrangements necessary for a grand marriage.

This woman, who was scarce thirty years of age, and a rather pretty brunette, looked vacantly around with her large black eyes. Did she see? It was doubted. She glided rather than walked. She never spoke, and people were not quite sure whether she breathed. Her nostrils were pinched and livid, as if she had drawn her last gasp; to touch her hand was like touching snow, and she had a strange spectral



"This woman, who was scarce thirty years of age, and a rather pretty
brunette, looked vacantly around with her large black eyes."

Les Misérables. Cosette: Page 216.



grace. Whenever she entered, she produced a chill; and one day a sister, seeing her pass, said to another, "She is supposed to be dead." "Perhaps she is," the other replied.

A hundred stories were current about Madame Albertine, and she was an eternal object of curiosity to the boarders. There was in the chapel a gallery called "The Bull's Eye," from its oval window; and it was in this place that Madame Albertine attended service. She was usually alone, because, as the gallery was high, the preacher or the officiating priest could be seen from it, which was prohibited to the nuns. One day the pulpit was occupied by a young priest of high rank,—the Duke de Rohan, peer of France, officer in the Red Musketeers, in 1815, when he was Prince de Leon, and who died afterward in 1830, as cardinal, and archbishop of Besançon. It was the first time this M. de Rohan had preached at the Little Picpus. Madame Albertine usually sat in perfect calmness and immobility through the service; but on this day, so soon as she perceived M. de Rohan, she half rose, and cried aloud amid the silence of the chapel, "Why, it is Auguste!" The whole community looked round in stupefaction; the preacher raised his eyes, but Madame Albertine had relapsed into her apathy. A breath from the outer world, a flash of life, had momentarily passed over that cold, dead face, then faded away, and the maniac once again became a corpse.

This remark, however, set everybody in the convent who was allowed to speak, to gossiping. What revelations were contained in that "Why, it is Auguste!" It was evident that Madame Albertine had moved in the highest society, since she knew M. de Rohan, spoke of so great a nobleman in such a familiar way, and was at least a near relative of his, since she knew his Christian name.

Two very strict duchesses, Mesdames de Choiseul and de Serent, frequently visited the community, doubtless by virtue of their privilege as *Magnates Mulieres*, and terribly frightened the boarders. When the two old ladies passed, all the poor girls trembled and let their eyes fall.

M. de Rohan was, besides, unwittingly the object of attention among the boarders. He had just been appointed, while waiting a bishopric, grand vicar to the archbishop of Paris; and it was one of his habits to serve Mass in the chapel of the Little Picpus convent. Not one of the young recluses could see him, on account of the baize curtain; but he had a soft and rather shrill voice, which they learned to recognize and distinguish. He had been a musketeer, and, besides, it was said that he was somewhat of a dandy, with fine chestnut hair curled round his head, and that he wore a broad girdle of magnificent watered silk, and that his black cassock was cut in the most elegant style. He greatly occupied all their youthful imaginations.

No external sound penetrated the convent, and yet one year the sound of a flute reached it. It was an event, and the boarders of that day still remember it.

It was a flute which some one was playing in the neighbourhood. It was always the same tune,—one now very old-fashioned, “Zétulba, come reign o'er my soul;” and it was heard two or three times a day. The girls spent hours in listening; the vocal mothers were upset, brains were at work, and punishments were constant. This lasted several months. The boarders were more or less enamoured of the unknown musician, and each fancied herself Zétulba. The sound of the flute came from the direction of the Rue Droit-mur. They would have given anything, risked anything, attempted anything, for the sake of seeing, if only for a moment, the “young man” who played that flute so exquisitely and at the same time played on all their souls. Some of them slipped out through a back door, and ascended to the third story looking out on the street, in order to try and see him through the grating; but it was impossible. One went so far as to pass her arm between the bars and wave her white handkerchief. Two others were even bolder. They managed to climb to the roof, and at length succeeded in seeing the “young man.” It was an old returned emigrant, blind and poor, who played the flute in his garret in order to kill time.

CHAPTER VI

THE LITTLE CONVENT

THERE were within the walls of Little Picpus three perfectly distinct buildings,—the Great Convent inhabited by the nuns, the school-house where the boarders were lodged, and, lastly, what was called the Little Convent. The latter was a house with a garden, in which all sorts of old nuns of various orders, the remnants of convents broken up in the Revolution, dwelt in common,—a reunion of all the black, white, and gray gowns of all communities, and all possible varieties; what might be called, were such a conjunction of words permissible, a harlequin-convent.

Under the empire, all these dispersed and homeless women were allowed to shelter themselves under the wings of the Cistercian-Benedictines; the Government paid them a small pension, and the ladies of Little Picpus eagerly received them. It was a strange pellmell, in which each followed her own rule. At times the boarders were allowed, as a great recreation, to pay them a visit; and it is from this that these young minds have retained a recollection of Holy Mother Bazile, Holy Mother Scholastica, and Mother Jacob.

One of these refugees was almost at home here. She was a nun of St. Aure,—the only one of her order who survived. The old convent of the ladies of St. Aure occupied at the beginning of the eighteenth century the same house which at a later date belonged to the Benedictines of Martin Verga. This holy woman, who was too poor to wear the magnificent habit of her order, which was a white robe with a scarlet scapulary, had piously dressed a small doll in it, which she was fond of showing, and which she left to the house at her death. In 1824 only one nun of this order remained; now only a doll is left.

In addition to these worthy mothers, a few old ladies of the world, like Madame Albertine, had gained permission from the prioress to retire into the Little Convent. Among them were Madame de Beaufort d'Hautpoul and the Marchioness Dufresne. Another was only known in the convent by the fearful noise she made when she blew her nose, and hence the boarders called her Madame Vacarmini.¹

About the year 1820, Madame de Genlis, who at that time edited a small periodical called "L'Intrepide" asked leave to board at Little Picpus; and the Duke d'Orleans recommended her. There was a commotion in the hive, and the vocal mothers were all of a flutter, for Madame de Genlis had written novels; but she declared that she was the first to detest them, and, moreover, she had reached a phase of fierce devotion. By the help of Heaven and the prince, she entered, and went away again at the end of six or eight months, alleging as a reason that the garden had no shade. The nuns were delighted. Although very old, she still played the harp, and remarkably well too.

When she went away she left her mark in her cell. Madame de Genlis was superstitious and a Latin scholar, these two terms give a very fair idea of her. A few years ago there might still be seen, pasted inside a small cupboard in her cell, where she kept her money and jewels, the five following Latin lines, written in her own hand with red ink on yellow paper, which, in her opinion, had the virtue of frightening away robbers:—

"Imparibus meritis pendente tria corpora ramis:
Dismas et Gesmas, media est divina potestas;
Alta petit Dismas, infelix, infima, Gesmas;
Nos et res nostras conservet summa, potestas,
Hos versus dicas, ne tu furto tua perdas."

These verses in sixth-century Latin raise the question whether the two thieves of Calvary were called, as is commonly believed, Demas and Gestas or Dismas and Gesmas.

¹ *Vacarme*,—a terrible noise.

The latter orthography would thwart the claims made in the last century by the Viscount de Gestas, to be descended from the wicked thief. However, the useful virtue attached to these verses is an article of faith in the order of the Hospitaller nuns.

The church, so built as to separate the Great Convent from the boarding-school was of course common to the school and the Great and Little Convents. The public was even admitted by a sort of quarantine entrance from the street; but everything was so arranged that no inhabitant of the convent could see a single face from the outer world. Imagine a church whose choir is seized by a gigantic hand, and crushed so as no longer to form, as in ordinary chapels, a prolongation behind the altar, but a sort of obscure cavern to the right of the officiating priest. Imagine this hall closed by the green baize curtain to which we have referred; pile up the nuns on the left, in the shadow of this curtain upon wooden seats, the boarders on the right, and the lay sisters and novices at the end,—and you will have some idea of the Little Picpus nuns attending divine service. This cavern which was called the choir, communicated with the convent by a covered way; and the church obtained its light from the garden. When the nuns were present at those services at which their rule commanded silence, the public were only warned of their presence by the sound of the folding seats as they were noisily raised and dropped.

CHAPTER VII

A FEW PROFILES CAST BY THE SHADOW

DURING the six years between 1819 and 1825, the prioress of Little Picpus was Mlle. de Blémeur, called, in religion, Mother Innocent. She belonged to the family of that Marguerite de Blémeur who wrote the “Lives of the

Saints of the Order of St. Benedict." She was a lady about sixty years old, short, stout, and with a voice "like a cracked pot," says the letter from which we have already quoted; but she was an excellent creature, the only merry soul in the convent, and on that account adored.

She followed in the footsteps of her ancestress Marguerite, the Dacier of the order. She was lettered, learned, competent, versed in the curiosities of history, stuffed with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and more of a monk than a nun.

The sub-prioress was an old Spanish nun, almost blind, Mother Cineres.

The most esteemed among the "vocals" were Mother Saint Honorine, the treasurer; Mother Saint Gertrude, first mistress of the novices, Mother Saint Ange, second mistress; Mother Annunciation, sacristan; Mother Saint Augustine, head of the infirmary (the only unkind person in the convent); then Mother Saint Mechtilde (Mlle. Gauvain), who was young, and had an admirable voice; Mother Angel (Mlle. Drouet), who had been in the convent of the Daughters of God, and that of the Treasury, near Gisors; Mother Saint Joseph (Mlle. de Cogolludo); Mother Saint Adelaide (Mlle. d'Auverney); Mother Misericordia (Mlle. de Cifuentes), who could not endure the privations; Mother Compassion (Mlle. de la Miltière, received at the age of sixty, contrary to the rule, but very rich); Mother Providence (Mlle. de Laudinière) Mother Presentation (Mlle. de Siguenza), who was prioress in 1847; and lastly, Mother Saint Celigne (sister of Ceracchi the sculptor), who went mad; and Mother Saint Chantal (Mlle. de Suzon), who also went mad.

Among the prettiest of them was a charming girl of three-and-twenty, who belonged to the Isle de Bourbon, and who was descended from the Chevalier Roze, and who was called in the world Mlle. Roze, in religion, Mother Assumption.

Mother Saint Mechtilde, who had charge of the singing and the choir, was glad to make use of the boarders for this purpose. She generally selected a complete musical scale,—

that is to say, seven assorted voices, from ten to sixteen years inclusive, whom she drew up in line, ranging from the shortest to the tallest. In this way she produced a species of living Pan pipe, composed of angels.

The lay sisters, whom the boarders loved best, were Sister Saint Euphrasia, Sister Saint Margaret, Sister Saint Martha, who was in her dotage, and Sister Saint Michael, at whose long nose they all laughed.

All these nuns were kind to the children, and stern only to themselves. There were no fires lit except in the school-house, and the food there was luxurious compared with that of the convent. When a child passed a nun and spoke to her, the latter never answered.

This rule of silence produced the result that throughout the convent language was withdrawn from human creatures and given to inanimate objects. Now it was the church bell that spoke, and now the gardener's bell, and a very sonorous gong, placed by the side of the portress, which could be heard all through the house, indicated by various peals, which were a sort of acoustic telegraph, all the actions of material life which had to be accomplished, and summoned a nun, if required, to the parlour. Each person and each thing had its own peal,—the prioress had one and one; the sub-prioress one and two; six-five announced the school-hour, so that the pupils talked of going to six-five; four-four was Madame de Genlis's signal; and, as it was heard very often, uncharitable persons said “she played the deuce with it.”¹ Nineteen strokes announced a great event; it meant the opening of the cloister door,—a terrible sheet of iron bristling with bolts, which turned on its hinges before the archbishop only.

With the exception of that dignitary and the gardener, no man ever entered the convent; but the boarders saw two others,—one was the chaplain, Abbé Banès, an ugly old man, whom they were allowed to contemplate in the choir, through a grating; while the other was M. Ansiaux, the

¹ The “diabol à quatre.”

drawing-master, whom the letter which we have already quoted, calls "M. Anciot," and describes as an odious old hunchback.

So we see that the men were carefully picked.

Such was this curious house.

CHAPTER VIII

POST CORDA LAPIDES

HAVING sketched the moral aspect, it may not be time lost to indicate in a few words the material configuration, of which the reader already possesses some idea.

The convent of Little Picpus occupied a large trapezium, formed by the four streets to which we have so frequently alluded, and which surrounded it like a moat. The convent was composed of several buildings and a garden. The main building, regarded as a whole, was a juxtaposition of hybrid constructions, which, viewed from a balloon, would very exactly form a gallows laid flat on the ground. The long arm of the gallows occupied the whole of that portion of the Rue Droit-mur, comprised between Little Rue Picpus and Rue Polonceau, while the shorter arm was a tall, gray stern, grated façade, looking on Little Rue Picpus, of which the carriage entrance, No. 62, was the extremity. Toward the centre of this façade, dust and ashes whitened an old, low-arched gate where spiders made their webs, and which was only opened for an hour or two on Sunday, and on the rare occasions when the coffin of a nun left the convent; this was the public entrance to the church. The elbow of the gallows was a square room, used as an office, which the nuns called the "buttery." In the long arm were the cells of the mothers, sisters, and novices; in the short one the kitchens, the refectory, along which a cloister ran, and the church.

Between No. 62 and the corner of Aumarais Lane was the school, which could not be seen from the outside. The rest of the trapezium formed the garden, which was much lower than the level of Rue Polonceau, the walls being thus much loftier inside than outside. The garden, which was slightly arched, had in the centre, on the top of a mound, a fine-pointed, conical fir-tree, from which ran, as from the boss of a shield, four large walks, with eight smaller ones arranged two and two, so that, had the enclosure been circular, the geometrical plan of the walks would have resembled a cross laid upon a wheel. The walks, which all extended to the extremely irregular walls of the garden, were of unequal length, and were bordered with gooseberry bushes. At the foot of the garden a poplar walk ran from the ruins of the old convent, at the corner of the Rue Droit-mur, to the Little Convent, at the corner of Aumarais Lane. In front of the Little Convent was what was called the small garden. If we add to this a courtyard, all sorts of varying angles formed by the inside buildings, prison walls affording the only prospect, and the long black line of roofs that ran along the other side of the Rue Polonceau, the sole neighbours, we can form an exact idea of what the house of the Cistercians of Little Picpus was five-and-forty years ago. This sacred house was built on the site of a famous tennis-court of the sixteenth century, which was called the "Tripot des onze mille diables."

All these streets, indeed, were among the oldest in Paris. The names Droit-mur and Aumarais are very old, but the streets that bear them are far older. Aumarais Lane was formerly known as Maugout Lane; the Rue Droit-mur was called the Rue des Eglantines, for God opened the flowers before man cut building-stones.

CHAPTER IX

A CENTURY UNDER A WIMPLE

AS we are giving details of what was formerly the Little Picpus Convent, and have ventured to let in light upon that discreet retreat, the reader will perhaps permit us another slight digression, which has nothing to do with the story, but is characteristic and useful in so far as it proves that even a convent may contain peculiar people.

There was in the Little Convent a centenarian, who came from the abbey of Fontevrault; and before the Revolution she had even been a woman of fashion. She talked a great deal about M. de Miromesnil, keeper of the seals under Louis XVI., and the wife of a President Duplat, who was a great friend of hers. It was her pleasure and pride to drag in these two names on every possible occasion. She told marvels about the abbey of Fontevrault,—that it was like a town, and that there were streets in the convent.

She spoke with a Picard accent which amused the boarders. Every year she solemnly renewed her vows, and at the moment of taking the oath she would say to the priest: "Saint Francis took it to Saint Julien, Saint Julien took it to Saint Eusebius, Saint Eusebius took it to Saint Procopius, etc., and thus I take it to you, father." And the boarders would laugh, not in their sleeves, but under their veils,—charming little suppressed laughs, which made the vocal mothers frown.

At other times the centenarian told anecdotes. She said that "in her youth the Bernardine monks were every bit as good as the Musketeers." A century spoke through her, but it was the eighteenth century. She described the custom of the four wines which existed in Burgundy and Champagne before the Revolution. When a great personage, a marshal of France, a prince, or a duke and peer, passed through a town in Champagne or Burgundy, the city officials came

out to address him and presented him with four silver cups filled with four different sorts of wine. On the first cup was the inscription "ape-wine," on the second, "lion-wine," on the third, "sheep-wine," and on the fourth, "hog-wine." These four mottoes expressed the four stages of intoxication, the first, which enlightens, the second, which irritates, the third, which dulls, and the fourth, which brutalizes.

She had a mysterious object, to which she was greatly attached, locked up in a cupboard. The rule of Fontevrault did not prohibit this. She would not show it to anybody. She locked herself in, which her rule also permitted, and hid herself whenever she desired to look at it. If she heard footsteps in the passage, she closed the cupboard as hastily as she could with her aged hands. So soon as it was mentioned, she, who was so fond of talking, held her tongue. The most curious persons were baffled by her silence, and the most tenacious by her obstinacy. This was a subject of comment for all the idlers and gossips in the convent. What could this precious, hidden treasure of the centenarian be? No doubt some pious book or unique rosary, or well-tried relic. On the poor woman's death, they ran to the cupboard, more quickly perhaps than was befitting, and opened it. They found the object under three folds of linen like a blessed paten. It was a Faenza plate representing cupids flying away, pursued by apothecaries' apprentices armed with enormous squirts. The chase is full of comical grimaces and postures. One of the charming little cupids is already impaled. He writhes, flutters his tiny wings, and strives to fly away, but his pursuer laughs a satanic laugh. Moral,—love conquered by a colic. This plate, which is very curious, and perhaps had the honour of furnishing Molière with an idea, still existed in September, 1845. It was for sale at a curiosity shop on the Boulevard Beaumarchais.

This good old woman would not receive any visitors "because," she said, "the parlour is too melancholy."

CHAPTER X

ORIGIN OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION

THIS almost sepulchral parlour which we have attempted to describe is a thoroughly local fact, not reproduced with the same severity in other convents. In the convent of the Rue du Temple, in particular, which, it is true, belonged to another order, brown curtains were substituted for the black shutters, and the parlour itself had a polished wood floor; there were white muslin curtains at the windows, and on the walls hung all sorts of pictures,—the portrait of a Benedictine nun with uncovered face, painted bouquets, and even the head of a Turk.

It was in the garden of this convent that the chestnut-tree grew which was considered the handsomest and largest in France, and which had the reputation among the worthy eighteenth-century folk of being “the father of all the chestnut-trees in the kingdom.”

As we said, this convent of the Temple was occupied by Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration, who greatly differed from those Benedictines who descended from Citeaux. This order of the Perpetual Adoration is not very ancient, and does not date back more than two hundred years. In 1649, the Holy Sacrament was twice profaned, at an interval of a few days, in two parish churches, St. Sulpice and St. Jean en Grève,—a rare and frightful sacrilege, which agitated the whole city. The prior and grand-vicar of St. Germain-des-Près ordered a solemn procession of all his clergy, in which the Papal Nuncio took part; but this expiation was not sufficient for two worthy ladies,—Madame Courtin, Marchioness de Boucs, and the Countess de Châteauvieux. This outrage to the “most august Sacrament of the Altar,” though transient, would not leave their pious minds, and it seemed to them that it could only be repaired

by a "perpetual adoration" in some nunnery. Both gave considerable sums of money, one in 1652 and the other in 1653, to Mother Catharine de Bar, called of the Holy Sacrament, a Benedictine nun, for the purpose of founding for this pious object a convent of the order of St. Benedict. The first permission for this foundation was given to Mother Catharine de Bar by M. de Metz, abbot of St. Germain, "on condition that no person should be received unless she brought a pension of three hundred livres, or a capital sum of six thousand livres. After this, the king granted letters-patent, which were countersigned in 1654 by the chamber of accounts and the Parliament.

Such are the origin and legal consecration of the establishment of the Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration of the Holy Sacrament at Paris. Their first convent was built in the Rue Cassette, out of the De Boucs and Châteavieux funds.

This order, as we see, must not be confounded with the Benedictines of Citeaux. It was a dependency of the abbot of St. Germain-des-Près, just as the ladies of the Sacred Heart are subject to the Jesuits, and the Sisters of Charity to the general of the Lazarists. It was also entirely different from the order of the Bernardines of Little Picpus, whose interior we have just shown. In 1657, Pope Alexander VII. by special brief, authorized the Bernardines of Little Picpus to practice the Perpetual Adoration like the Benedictines of the Holy Sacrament, but the two orders did not remain the less distinct.

CHAPTER XI

END OF LITTLE PICPUS

TOWARD the beginning of the Restoration, Little Picpus began to pine away. It shared in the general death of the order, which, after the eighteenth century, began to decay, like all religious orders. Contemplation, like prayer, is one of humanity's needs; but, like all that the Revolution touched, it is transformed, and made favourable to human progress, instead of hostile to it.

The house of Little Picpus was rapidly depopulated. In 1840, the Little Convent and the school had disappeared. There were no old women or young girls left; the former were dead, the latter had fled. *Volaverunt.*

The rule of the Perpetual Adoration is so strict that it horrifies; novices hold back, and the order gains no recruits. In 1845, it still acquired a lay sister here and there, but no professed nuns. Forty years ago there were nearly one hundred nuns; fifteen years ago there were only twenty-eight; how many are there now? In 1847, the prioress was young, — a sign that the choice was becoming restricted. In proportion as the number diminishes, the fatigue increases; the service of each becomes more painful; and the moment may be seen approaching when there will be only a dozen bent and aching shoulders to bear the heavy rule of St. Benedict. The burden is implacable, and remains the same for the few as for the many; it once weighed heavily, but now it crushes. Hence they die. When the author of this book still resided in Paris, two died,—one twenty-five, the other twenty-three, years of age. The latter can say, like Julia Alpinula, "*Hic jaceo. Vixi annos viginti et tres.*" It is owing to this decay that the convent has given up the education of girls.

We are unable to pass this extraordinary, unknown and

obscure house without entering, and taking with us those who are reading — we trust with some advantage to themselves — the melancholy story of Jean Valjean. We have penetrated into this community, full of those old practices which seem so novel at the present day. It is the closed garden,— *hortus conclusus*. We have spoken of this singular place in detail, but with respect in so far at least, as respect and detail are compatible. We do not understand all, but we insult nothing. We are equally removed from the Hossanna of Joseph de Maistre, who ended by consecrating the executioner, and from the sneer of Voltaire, who went so far as to ridicule the crucifix.

Illogical is Voltaire, be it said in passing; Voltaire would have defended Christ as he defended Calas. Even for those who deny superhuman incarnations, what does the crucifix represent? The wise man murdered.

In the nineteenth century the religious idea is passing through a crisis. Some things are unlearned,— an excellent theory, provided that in unlearning one thing we learn another. There can be no vacuum in the human heart. Certain demolitions take place, and it is right that they should, on condition that they are followed by reconstructions.

Meanwhile, let us study things that have passed away. We should know them, if only to avoid them. Counterfeits of the past assume false names, and like to call themselves the future. That spectre, the past, is apt to falsify its passport. Let us be on our guard. Let us distrust the trick. The past has a visage, superstition, and a mask,— hypocrisy. Let us denounce the visage and tear off the mask.

As for convents, they offer a complex problem. A question for civilization, which condemns them, and for liberty, which protects them.

BOOK VII

A PARENTHESIS

CHAPTER I

THE CONVENT AS AN ABSTRACT IDEA

THIS book is a drama in which the chief character is the Infinite.

Man is the second.

This being the case, as a convent lies in our road, it was our duty to enter. Why? Because the convent is an institution common to the East as well as to the West, to antiquity and to modern times, to Paganism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, as well as to Christianity, and is one of the optical instruments applied by man to the Infinite.

This is not the place to develop, without qualification, certain ideas; nevertheless, while strictly maintaining our reserves, restrictions, and even our indignation, we are bound to say that whenever we find in man the Infinite, ill or well understood, we feel the deepest respect. In the synagogue, the mosque, the pagoda, the wigwam, there is a hideous side which we execrate, and a sublime side which we adore. What a subject of contemplation for the soul, and what endless food for thought, is furnished by the reverberation of God upon the human wall!

CHAPTER II

THE CONVENT AS AN HISTORICAL FACT

FROM the point of view of history, reason, and truth, monasticism is to be condemned.

Monasteries, when numerous in a nation, clog its circulation. They are cumbrous establishments, centres of idleness, where there should be centres of labour. Monastic communities are to the great social community what the mistletoe is to the oak, or the wart to the human body. Their prosperity and their increase impoverish the country. Monastic rule, excellent at the outset of civilization, useful in subjugating the bodily by the spiritual, is injurious to the manhood of nations. Moreover, when it relaxes and enters on its period of disorder, as it continues to set the example, it is evil for the very reasons which made it salutary in its period of purity.

The claustral system has had its day. The cloister, useful in the early education of modern civilization, has been hurtful to its growth, and injurious to its development. As an institution and a method of training men, the monastery, good in the tenth century, doubtful in the fifteenth, is detestable in the nineteenth. The leprosy of monasticism has eaten almost to a skeleton two great nations,—Italy and Spain,—one the light, the other the splendour, of Europe for centuries; and at the present day these two illustrious nations are only just beginning to recover, thanks to the sound and vigorous hygiene of 1789.

The convent, especially the antique convent for women, as it still existed on the threshold of this century, in Italy, Austria, and Spain, is one of the most gloomy products of the middle ages. It is the point where terrors intersect. The Catholic convent, properly so called, is filled with the black rays of death.

The Spanish convent, especially, is funereal. There, in the darkness, under vaults full of misty gloom, under domes which shadows render vague, rise massive Babel-like altars, high as cathedrals; their immense white crucifixes are suspended by chains in the darkness; there huge Christs of ivory are displayed, naked, against a background of ebony, more bloody than bleeding,—hideous and magnificent. The elbows display the bones, the knees display the integuments; the wounds display the flesh, crowned with silver thorns, pierced with nails of gold, with blood-drops of rubies on the brow, and tears of diamonds in the eyes. The diamonds and rubies seem to drip and draw tears, down below in the shadows from veiled figures whose loins are tortured by the shirt of hair, or by the scourge with its points of iron; their breasts crushed by woven wicker-work, and their knees flayed by prayer,—women who believe themselves wives; ghosts who believe themselves seraphim. Do these women think? No! Have they any will? No! Do they love? No! Do they live? No! Their nerves have become bone; their bones are turned to stone; their veil is of woven night, and beneath it their breath is like the tragic respiration of death. The abbess,—a spectre,—consecrates and terrifies them. The Immaculate one is there, sternly fierce. Such are the old monasteries of Spain,—haunts of terrible devotion; dens of virgins, savage lairs.

Catholic Spain was more Roman than Rome herself, and the Spanish convent was pre-eminently the Catholic convent. There was an air of the Orient about it; the archbishop, the *Kislär-agär* of Heaven, kept watch and ward over this seraglio of souls reserved for God. The nun was the odalisque, the priest the eunuch. The fervent became in dreams the chosen ones who possessed Christ; at night the beautiful naked youth came down from the cross and became the ecstasy of the cell. Lofty walls guarded from all living distractions the mystic sultana who had the crucified one for her sultan; a glance outside was an infidelity. The *in pace* took the place of the leather sack; and what was hurled into the

sea in the East, was flung into the earth in the West. In both, women wrung their hands. The wave for those, the grave for these; there the drowned, here the buried. Hideous parallel!

To-day, the defenders of the past, as they cannot deny these things, pretend to smile at them. There is a strange and convenient fashion in vogue of suppressing the revelations of history, of weakening the deductions of philosophy, and getting rid of all troublesome facts and disagreeable questions. "Mere rant," say the clever. "Rant," repeat the fools. Rousseau, Diderot, both ranters; Voltaire speaking of Calas, Labarre, and Sivern, a mere ranter, some one or other has lately discovered that Tacitus was a ranter. Nero a victim, and that decidedly we should pity "poor Holofernes."

Facts, however, are hard to refute, and are inflexible. The writer has seen with his own eyes, within eight leagues of Brussels,—where all the world may find relics of the middle ages,—at the abbey of Villers, the dungeon hole in the middle of the field which was formerly the courtyard of the convent, and, on the banks of the Thil, four stone cells, half under ground, half under water. These were the *in pace*. Each of these dungeons cells has the remains of an iron gate, a privy, and a grated aperture,—outside, two feet above the river; inside, six feet above the level of the ground. Four feet of water run outside the wall. The ground is always soaked; and this damp ground the inhabitant of the *in pace* had for her bed. In one of the cells is the fragment of an iron collar fastened to the wall; in another is a kind of square box made of four slabs of granite, too short to lie in, too low to stand in. A living being was placed within it, with a stone covering over all. It is there; you can see it, you can touch it. These *in pace*, these cells, these iron hinges, these collars, this window on a level with the river, this stone box closed with a granite lid like a tomb, with this difference, that here the dead was a living creature, this soil of mud, this hole of sewage, these dripping walls,—what "eloquent ranters" they are!

CHAPTER III

ON WHAT CONDITIONS THE PAST IS TO BE RESPECTED

MONASTICISM, as it existed in Spain, and as it still exists in Thibet, is the phthisis of civilization. It cuts life short; it simply depopulates. Clastration is castration. It has been the curse of Europe. Add to this, violated consciences, forced vocations, feudalism relying on the cloister, primogeniture turning over to monastic life the overplus of the family, the cruelties just mentioned, the *in pace*, the closed lips, the walled-up brains, the many hapless intellects imprisoned in eternal vows, the assumption of the habit, the interment of living souls. Add individual suffering to national degradation, and, whoever you may be, you will tremble before the frock and the veil, whose two shrouds of human invention.

Still, at certain points and in certain places, in spite of philosophy and progress, the monastic spirit survives in the midst of the nineteenth century; and a strange ascetic revival even now astonishes the civilized world. The persistence of antiquated institutions in perpetuating themselves resembles the determination of rancid perfume to cling to our hair, the claim of spoiled fish to be eaten, the struggle of a child's garment to clothe a man, and the tenderness of the corpse returning to embrace the living.

“Ingrates!” cries the garments. “I protected you in bad weather; why do you cast me off?” “I come from the open sea,” says the fish; “I have been the rose,” says the perfume; “I have loved you,” says the corpse; “I have civilized you,” says the convent.

To this there is only one reply,—“Once upon a time.”

To dream of the indefinite prolongation of dead things, and of the government of man by mummies, to revive decayed dogmas, regild shrines, repaint cloisters, revarnish

reliquaries, restore superstitions, renew holy-water brushes and militarism, reconstitute monasticism and militarism, to believe in the saving of society by the multiplication of parasites, to impose the past on the present, seems strange indeed. But the theorists who support such theories, men of talent in other respects, have a simple method of procedure; they give to the past a coating which they call social order, divine right, morality, family, respect of ancestry, ancient authority, holy tradition, legitimacy, religion, and they rush about crying, "Here, good people! here is the thing for you." This logical process was known to the ancients, the soothsayers practised it. They chalked a black heifer and said, "She is white,"—*bos cretatus*.

As for us, we respect the past here and there, and spare it everywhere, provided it consents to be dead. If it resolves to be alive, we attack it and try to kill it.

Superstition, bigotry, hypocrisy, prejudice,—these spectres, spectres though they be, are tenacious of life; they have teeth and claws in their smoke. We must grasp them, and assail them at close quarters, and wage a war without truce; for it is one of the fatalities of humanity to be condemned to an eternal war with phantoms, and it is hard to take a phantom by the throat and hurl it to earth.

A convent in France, in the broad light of the nineteenth century, is a cottage of owls facing the noon-day sun. A convent, in the overt act of asceticism in the very heart of the city, of 1789, of 1830, and of 1848,—Rome blossoming in Paris,—is an anachronism. In ordinary times, to dissipate an anachronism and to force it to vanish, one has only to make it spell out the year in the calendar. But we are not in ordinary times.

Let us fight.

Let us fight then, but let us distinguish. Truth is never excessive; why need she exaggerate? Some things must be destroyed, and some things have simply to be examined and elucidated. What force there is in kindly and serious examination. Let us not apply fire where a light suffices.

Given, then, this nineteenth century, we are opposed to ascetic monasticism, on general principles, in every nation, in Asia and Europe, in India and in Turkey. The word convent means a swamp; their putrescence is evident, their stagnation unhealthy, their fermentation breeds fever and wasting sickness, their multiplication is a plague of Egypt. We cannot think without a shudder of those countries where fakirs, bonzes, santons, Greek monks, marabouts, talapins, and dervishes sprout like swarms of vermin.

But the religious question still remains. This question has certain aspects which are mysterious, almost appalling. Let us look at it steadily.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONVENT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF PRINCIPLE

MEN unite and dwell in communities, in virtue of the right of association. They shut themselves up, in virtue of the right which every man has to open or close his door. They do not go out, in virtue of the right to come and go, which implies the right to stay at home.

What do they do at home?

They speak low, cast down their eyes, labour, renounce the world, the city, joys of the senses, pleasures, vanities, pride, interest. They are clad in coarse wool or coarse linen. Not one of them possesses anything whatever in his own right. On entering, the rich become poor; for what they have they give to all. He who is noble or high born is the equal of him that is a peasant. The cell is the same for all; all undergo the same tonsure, wear the same robe, eat the same black bread, sleep on the same straw, and die on the same ashes. The same sackcloth is on every back, the same cord around every waist. If the rule is to go barefoot, all go barefoot.

One man may be a prince; he is the same shadow as the others. No more titles; even family names disappear; they bear only Christian names, and all bend beneath the equality of baptismal names. They abolish the carnal family and constitute in their community a spiritual family; they have no kindred save humanity. They succour the poor, nurse the sick, elect those whom they obey, and call each other "Brother."

You stop me with the exclamation: "Why, this is the ideal convent!"

That it is the possible convent is sufficient to induce me to examine it.

Hence it is that in the preceding book I have spoken of a convent in a respectful tone. Setting aside the middle ages and Asia, reserving the historical and political question, from a purely philosophical point of view, apart from the necessities of aggressive politics, I shall always, on condition that the monastery be voluntary and contain only willing members, regard monastic communities with a certain attentive gravity, and in some points with respect. Where there is a community there is a commune, and in the commune is the Right. The monastery is the result of the formula, Equality, Fraternity. Ah, Liberty is great; how splendid is the transfiguration! Liberty can transform the monastery into the Republic!

Let us continue. These men or women behind these four walls dress coarsely, are equals, and call each other brothers or sisters. It is well. Do they do anything else?

Yes.

What?

They gaze into the shadows beyond this world, they kneel and clasp their hands.

What does this mean?

CHAPTER V

PRAYER

THEY pray.
To whom?

God.

What does it mean to pray to God?

Is there an infinite beyond us? Is this infinite imminent and permanent, necessarily substantial, because it is infinite, and because if it were devoid of matter it would therefore be limited; necessarily intelligent, because it is infinite, and because if it were devoid of intelligence, it would be finite? Does this infinite awake in us the idea of being, while we can only attribute to ourselves the idea of existence? In other terms, is it not the absolute, of which we are only the relative?

At the same time that there is an infinite outside of us, is there not an infinite within us? Are these two infinities (terrible plural), superimposed, one on the other? Is not the second infinite, so to speak, subjacent to the first? Is it not the mirror, the reflection, the echo thereof,—an abyss concentric to another abyss? Is this second infinite intelligent also? Does it think? Does it love? Does it will? If these two infinities are intelligent, each of them has a principle which wills; and there is an *I* to the infinite on high as there is an *I* to the infinite below. The *I* below is the soul; the *I* above is God.

To bring, by means of thought, the infinite above in contact with the infinite below, is prayer.

We take nothing from the human soul, for all suppression is evil; we must reform and transform. Certain of our faculties are directed toward the Unknown; such are thought, reverie and prayer. The Unknown is an ocean; our conscience is the compass of the Unknown. Thought, reverie,

prayer, are great and mysterious radiations; let us respect them. Whither go these majestic radiations of the soul? Into the shadow,—that is to say, into the light.

The greatness of democracy is to deny nothing and renounce nothing of humanity. Beside the rights of man are the rights of the soul.

To crush fanaticism and to venerate the infinite, such is the law. Let us not confine ourselves to falling prostrate before the tree of creation, and to the contemplation of its immense branches filled with stars; it is our duty to labour for the human soul, to defend mystery against miracle, to adore the incomprehensible and reject the absurd, to admit as inexplicable fact only what we must, to purify faith, to remove superstition from religion, to brush the canker-worm from God.

CHAPTER VI

ABSOLUTE GOODNESS OF PRAYER

AS regards modes of prayer, all are good provided they are sincere.

Turn your book upside down, and be in the infinite.

There is a school of philosophy, we know, that denies the infinite, and also a school of philosophy, classed in pathology, that denies the sun, and is called Blindness.

To make the absence of a sense the source of truth, is the cool audacity of a blind man.

It is curious to note the haughty air of superiority and pity which this philosophy that gropes its way assumes toward the philosophy that sees God; it is like the mole crying, “I am sorry for them and their sun!”

There are, we know, illustrious atheists with great intellectual powers. At bottom, these men, brought back to truth by their very powers, are not quite sure of being athe-

ists. It is with them merely a question of definition; and, in any case, if they do not believe in God, they, as they are great men, prove the existence of God.

We salute them as philosophers, but reject their philosophy.

It is curious, too, to see with what facility men juggle with words. A Northern school of metaphysics, somewhat impregnated with fog, thought to achieve a revolution in human understanding, by replacing the word *Force* by the word *Will*.

To say "the plant wills," instead of "the plant grows," would be fecund in results if we added, "the universe wills," because the inference could then be drawn, the plant wills, therefore it has an *I*; the universe wills, therefore there is a God.

To us, however, who, in contradistinction to this school, reject nothing *a priori*, a will in the plant accepted by this school, seems more difficult to admit than a will in the universe, which it denies.

To deny will to the infinite,—that is, to God,—is only possible by denying the infinite.

Negation of the infinite leads straight to nihilism; everything becomes a "concept of the mind."

With nihilism, no discussion is possible; for logical nihilism doubts the existence of its opponent, and is not sure of its own. It is possible, from its standpoint, that it is only a "concept of the mind." It does not perceive, however, that it admits everything which it has denied when it utters the word "mind."

In brief, no path for thought is opened by a philosophy which makes everything end in the monosyllable, No.

To No there is but one answer,—Yes.

Nihilism has no compass.

There is no such thing as nothingness. Zero does not exist. Everything is something. Nothing is nothing.

Man lives by affirmation even more than by bread.

To see and to show is not enough; philosophy should

be a force; it should have for aim and result the amelioration of man. Socrates should enter into Adam and produce Marcus Aurelius,—that is, produce from the man of happiness, the man of wisdom, and change Eden into a Lyceum. Knowledge should be a tonic. To enjoy,—what a sad aim, what a paltry ambition! The brute enjoys. To think is the true triumph of the soul. To hold out thought to quench the thirst of man; to give to all, as an elixir, the idea of God; to make knowledge and conscience fraternize in them; to render them just by this mysterious partnership,—such is the function of true philosophy. Morality is the blossoming of truths; contemplation leads to action; the absolute should be practical; the ideal should be such that it can be breathed, drunk, and eaten by the human mind. The ideal has the right to say, "Take, eat; this is my body, this is my blood." Wisdom is a holy communion. On this condition it ceases to be a sterile love of science, and becomes the one sovereign mode of rallying the human race, and is promoted to a religion in place of being a philosophy.

Philosophy should not be a tower built upon a mystery to look down upon it at its ease, and only convenient for curiosity.

Adjourning to another occasion the development of our thought, we will confine ourselves here to saying that we understand neither man as a starting-point nor progress as an end without those two motive powers, faith and love.

Progress is the goal; the ideal is the type.

What is this ideal? God.

Ideal, Absolute, Perfection, Infinite: synonymous terms.

CHAPTER VII

PRECAUTIONS TO BE EXERCISED IN CENSURING

HISTORY and philosophy have eternal duties which are at the same time simple duties. To oppose Caiaphas the High Priest, Draco the judge, Trimalcion the law-giver, Tiberius, the emperor,—this is clear, direct, and limpid, and presents no difficulty. But the right to live apart, even with its inconveniences and its abuses, must be proved and carefully dealt with. Monastic life is a human problem.

In speaking of convents,—those abodes of error, but of innocence, of aberrations, but of good intentions, of ignorance, but of piety, of torture, but of martyrdom,—we must nearly always say both yes and no.

A convent is a contradiction: its aim is salvation; its means to that end, sacrifice. The convent is supreme egotism resulting in supreme self-denial.

The motto of monasticism seems to be “Abdicate in order to reign.”

In the cloister, men suffer in order to enjoy, draw bills of exchange on death, and discount the light of heaven in earthly darkness; in the cloister, hell is accepted as an advance on the heirship to paradise.

Taking the veil or the frock, is a suicide paid for by eternity.

On such a subject, mockery is out of place; everything connected with it is serious, whether it be good or evil.

The just man frowns, but never sneers. We sympathize with wrath, not with malignity.

CHAPTER VIII

FAITH — LAW

A FEW words more.

We condemn the Church when it is steeped in intrigues; we despise the spiritual when it is austere toward the temporal; but we everywhere honour the thinking man.

We reverence the man who kneels.

Faith is a necessity for man. Woe to him who believes nothing.

To be absorbed is not necessarily to be unoccupied. There is an invisible as well as a visible labour.

To contemplate is to labour, to think is to act.

Folded arms toil, and clasped hands work; a gaze fixed on heaven is a work.

Thales remained four years motionless, and founded philosophy.

To our thinking, monks are not idlers, nor hermits sluggards.

To meditate of the shadow-world is a serious thing.

Without retracting a word of what we have just said, we believe that a perpetual reminder of the tomb is good for the living. Poet and philosopher here agree. "We must die," is the response of La Trappe to Horace.

To mix with life a certain presence of the sepulchre, is the law of the sage and of the ascetic, who, in this respect, agree.

There is a material increase which we desire and a moral grandeur to which we cling.

Certain irreflective and precipitate souls ask:—

"What is the use of these motionless figures by the side of mystery? What purpose do they serve? What do they do?"

Alas! in the presence of the darkness which surrounds

and awaits us, ignorant of what the dispersion of all things shall make of us, we reply: "No work, perhaps, is more sublime than that performed by these souls." And we add: "Perhaps no labour is more useful."

There must be those who pray constantly for those who never pray.

The whole question lies in the quantity of thought put into the prayer.

Leibnitz praying is great, Voltaire worshipping is beautiful. "Deo erexit Voltaire."

We are for religion against religions.

We believe in the poverty of orisons and the sublimity of prayer.

At this period,—a period which, happily, will leave no impress on the century, when so many men have low foreheads, and souls far from lofty, among so many mortals whose moral code is enjoyment, and who are busied with ephemeral and shapeless material things,—any one who voluntarily exiles himself is worthy of veneration.

The convent is abnegation; sacrifice wrongly directed is still sacrifice. There is grandeur in taking a serious error for a duty.

By itself, ideally, examining truth under every possible aspect, the convent, the nunnery especially,—for in our age it is woman who suffers most, and she makes her protest, in this exile of the cloister,—the nunnery undoubtedly possesses a certain majesty.

This austere and depressing cloistered existence, some features of which we have traced, is not life, for it is not liberty; it is not the tomb, for it is completion. It is the strange spot where we behold, from a mountain crest, on one side the abyss in which we are, on the other, the abyss whither we shall go; it is the narrow, misty frontier separating two worlds, illumined and obscured by both at once, where the enfeebled ray of life mingles with the vague ray of death; it is the penumbra of the tomb.

We, who do not believe what these women believe, but

who, like them, live by faith, have never been able to contemplate without a holy and tender terror, and a kind of pity full of envy, those devoted creatures, trembling and trusting, those humble and august souls who dare to live on the very edge of mystery, waiting between the world which is closed and heaven which is not yet open, turning toward the brightness they see not, possessing only the happiness of thinking that they know where it is, aspiring to the gulf and the unknown, with eyes fixed motionless on the darkness, kneeling, bewildered, stupefied, shuddering, half lifted on high at times by the deep breath of eternity.

BOOK VIII

CEMETERIES TAKE WHAT IS GIVEN THEM

CHAPTER I

HOW TO GET INTO A CONVENT

IT WAS into this house that Jean Valjean had “fallen from heaven,” as Fauchelevent said.

He had climbed the garden-wall which formed the corner of the Rue Polonceau; that angel hymn which he had heard in the middle of the night was the nuns chanting matins; the hall of which he had caught a glimpse in the darkness was the chapel; the phantom he had seen stretched out on the ground was a sister “making reparation;” and the bell which had so strangely surprised him was the gardener’s bell, fastened to Fauchelevent’s knee.

So soon as Cosette was in bed, Jean Valjean and Fauchelevent, as we have seen, supped on a glass of wine and a lump of cheese, before a good blazing fire; then, as the only bed in the cottage was occupied by Cosette, each threw himself on a truss of straw.

Before he closed his eyes, Jean Valjean said, “I must stop here henceforth;” and this remark trotted through Fauchelevent’s head all night.

In fact, neither of them slept.

Jean Valjean, feeling that he was discovered, and that Javert was on his track, understood that he and Cosette were lost if they returned to Paris. Since the fresh blast

which had burst upon him had stranded him in this convent, Jean Valjean had but one thought,—to remain there. Now, for a wretch in his position, this convent was at once the most dangerous and the safest of places,—the most dangerous, because as no man was allowed to enter it, if he were discovered it would be a flagrant offence, and Jean Valjean would take but one step from the convent to the prison; the safest, because if he succeeded in remaining, who would ever seek him there? To inhabit an impossible spot was salvation.

On his side, Fauchelevent racked his brains. He began by declaring to himself that he understood nothing. How did M. Madeleine get there in spite of all the surrounding walls? Convent walls are not to be passed at a stride. How did he get there with a child? People do not scale a perpendicular wall with a child in their arms. Who was this child? Where did they both come from? Since Fauchelevent had been in the convent, he had received no news from M——, and did not know what had occurred there. Father Madeleine had that look which discourages questions; and, moreover, Fauchelevent said to himself, "A saint is not to be cross-questioned." M. Madeleine retained all his prestige in Fauchelevent's eyes. It was only from a few words which escaped Jean Valjean, that the gardener fancied he could come to the conclusion that M. Madeleine had probably been made bankrupt by the hard times, and was pursued by his creditors; or else he was compromised in some political affair, and was in hiding,—which idea did not displease Fauchelevent, because, like most of the peasants in the north of France, he was a stanch Bonapartist. M. Madeleine had chosen the convent as his asylum, and it was quite natural that he should wish to remain there. But the inexplicable thing, to which Fauchelevent constantly recurred and which addled his brains, was that M. Madeleine should be there, and be there with that child. Fauchelevent saw them, touched them, spoke to them, and still could not believe it. The incomprehensible had entered his hovel. He stumbled

among conjectures and saw nothing clearly but this,—“M. Madeleine saved my life.” This sole certainty was sufficient, and decided him; he said to himself, “It is my turn now.” He added in his conscience: “M. Madeleine did not deliberate so long when he had to get under the cart to pull me out;” and he decided to save M. Madeleine.

However, he asked himself several questions, to which he gave divers answers. “After what he did for me, should I save him if he were a robber? All the same. If he were an assassin, would I save him? All the same. Since he is a saint, shall I save him? All the same.”

What a problem it was, though, to enable him to remain in the convent! Still, Fauchelevent did not shrink from this almost chimerical attempt; the poor Picardy peasant, who had no other ladder but his devotion, his good-will, and a small stock of the antique rustic craft and cunning, now enlisted in a generous enterprise, undertook to scale the impossibilities of the convent and the rough escarpments of the rule of St. Benedict. Fauchelevent was an old man who had been selfish all his life, and who, toward the end of his days, limping, infirm, and taking no interest in the world, found it pleasant to be grateful, and seeing a virtuous action to be done, flung himself upon it like a man who, at the point of death, lays his hand on a glass of good wine which he had never tasted, and eagerly drinks it off. We may add that the air which he had breathed for some years in this convent had destroyed his personality, and had eventually rendered a good deed, of some sort, a necessity for him.

He therefore resolved to devote himself to M. Madeleine.

We have just called him a “poor Picardy peasant;” the description is correct, but incomplete. At the present stage of our story, a little of Father Fauchelevent’s physiology may be useful. He was a peasant, but had he been a notary, which added chicanery to his cunning and penetration to his simplicity. Having, for various reasons, failed in business, he descended from a notary to be a carter and day-labourer;

but, in spite of the oaths and lashes which horses seem to require, something of the notary had clung to him. He was not without natural wit; he did not say "I are" or "I has." He could converse, which is a rare thing in a village; and the other peasants used to say of him, "He talks almost like a gentleman in a tall hat." Fauchelevent, in fact, belonged to that species which the impertinent and airy vocabulary of the last century qualified as "half town, half clown," and which the metaphors showered by the castle on the cottage ticketed in the pigeon-hole of the plebeian: "A bit of a rustic and a bit of a townsman, pepper and salt." Fauchelevent, though sorely tried and hardly used by fate, a sort of poor, threadbare old soul, was still a man to act on the first impulse, and very spontaneous,—a precious quality which prevents a man from ever being wicked. His defects and vices, for he had such, were on the surface; and altogether his physiognomy was one of those which please the observer. His old face had none of those ugly wrinkles at the top of the forehead which signify wickedness or stupidity.

At daybreak, after doing a vast deal of thinking, Father Fauchelevent opened his eyes and saw M. Madeleine sitting on his truss of straw, looking at the sleeping Cosette; Fauchelevent sat up too, and said:

"Now that you are here, how will you manage to get in?"

This remark summed up the situation, and aroused Jean Valjean from his reverie.

The two men held counsel.

"In the first place," said Fauchelevent, "you must begin by not setting foot outside this cottage,—either you or the little one. One step in the garden, and we are done for."

"That is true."

"Monsieur Madeleine," continued Fauchelevent, "you have come at a very lucky moment,—I mean a very unfortunate moment,—for one of our ladies is dangerously ill. In consequence of this, folk will not look much this

way. It seems that she is dying, and the forty hours' prayers are being said. The whole community is in confusion. That occupies all their thoughts. The person who is on the point of departure is a saint. In fact, though, we are all saints here; the only difference between them and me is that they say 'our cell,' and I say 'my cottage.' There will be prayers for the dying, and then the prayers for the dead. For to-day we shall be quiet here; but I do not answer for to-morrow."

"Still," observed Jean Valjean, "this cottage is retired. It is hidden by a sort of ruin; there are trees; and it cannot be seen from the convent."

"And I may add that the nuns never approach it."

"Well?" asked Valjean.

The interrogation that marked this "well" signified, "I fancy that we can remain concealed here;" and it was to this interrogation that Fauchelevent replied:—

"There are the little ones."

"What little ones?" asked Valjean.

As Fauchelevent opened his mouth to answer, a stroke rang out from a bell.

"The nun is dead," he said; "that is the knell."

And he signed to Jean Valjean to listen.

A second stroke rang out.

"It is the passing bell, Monsieur Madeleine. The bell will go on so minute after minute for twenty-four hours, till the body leaves the church.—You see they play about; at recreation they have only to lose a ball, and, in spite of the prohibition, they will come and look for it here, and ransack everything. Those cherubs are little devils."

"Who?" asked Valjean.

"The little girls; I can tell you that you would soon be discovered. They would cry out, 'Why, it's a man!' But there is no danger to-day, for there will be no recreation. The whole day will be spent in prayer. You hear the bell. As I told you, one stroke a minute,—it is the death-knell."

"I understand, Father Fauchelevent; there are boarders."

And Jean Valjean thought to himself, "It is a chance to educate Cosette."

Fauchelevent exclaimed:—

"By Jove, I should think there are boarders! They would shriek over you and then run away. To be a man here, is to have the plague. You see how they fasten a bell to my paw as if I were a wild beast."

Jean Valjean reflected more and more deeply. "This convent would save us," he muttered. Then he added aloud, "Yes, the difficulty is to remain."

"No," said Fauchelevent, "it is to get out."

Jean Valjean felt the blood rush back to his heart.

"To get out?"

"Yes, M. Madeleine; in order to come in, you must get out." And, pausing till another stroke of the bell had died away, Fauchelevent added, "You must not be found here like this. Where did you come from? For me, you fall from heaven, because I know you; but the nuns require that people should come in by the front door."

All at once a complicated ringing of another bell was heard.

"Ah!" said Fauchelevent, "they are ringing for the vocal mothers. They are going to hold a chapter; a chapter is always held when any one dies. She died at daybreak. People generally die at daybreak. But can't you get out by the way you came in? Come, I don't want to ask you any questions,—but how did you get in?"

Jean Valjean turned pale. The mere idea of going back into that terrible street made him tremble. Having come out of a forest full of tigers, and once out of it, just imagine a friend advising you to go in again. Jean Valjean figured to himself the police still searching the quarter, agents on the watch, sentinels everywhere, frightful fists stretched out toward his collar, and Javert perhaps in a corner lurking for his prey.

"Impossible!" he said. "Suppose, Father Fauchelevent, that I really fell from above."

"Why, I believe it," returned Fauchelevent; "you need not tell me so. The good God must have picked you up to get a good look at you, and dropped you,—only he meant to put you in a monastery; he made a mistake. Well, there is another peal; that is to tell the porter to go and warn the municipal authorities that they must send and inform the physician of the dead that he is to come and see the body. All that is the ceremony of dying. The good ladies are not very fond of such visits, for a doctor believes in nothing; he raises the veil, and sometimes raises something else.

"What a hurry they have been in to call the doctor this time! What is up, I wonder? Your little girl is still asleep; what is her name?"

"Cosette."

"Is she your daughter? I mean, are you her grandfather?"

"Yes."

"It will be easy enough to get her out. I have my back door, which opens into the courtyard; I knock, the porter opens. I have my basket on my back, with the little girl in it, and go out. Father Fauchelevent goes out with his basket,—that is simple enough. You will tell her to be very quiet, and she will be under the lid. I will leave her for the necessary time with a good old friend of mine, a green-grocer in the Rue du Chemin Vert, who is deaf, and who has a little bed. I will shout in her ear that it is my niece, and bid her keep her for me till to-morrow; then the little one will come in with you, for I mean to bring you in again. But how will you manage to get out?"

Valjean shook his head.

"The great point is that no one sees me, Father Fauchelevent. Find means to get me out in the same way as Cosette."

Fauchelevent scratched the tip of his ear with the mid-

dle finger of his left hand, which was a sign of serious embarrassment.

A third peal caused a diversion.

"That is the doctor going away," said Fauchelevent.

"He has taken a look and said, 'She is dead; all right.' When the doctor has signed the passport for paradise, the undertakers send a coffin. If it is a mother, the mothers put her in it; if a sister, the sisters; and after that, I nail it up.

"That is part of my gardening, for a gardener is a bit of a grave-digger. The coffin is placed in the vestry, which communicates with the street, and which no man is allowed to enter but the doctor,— for I don't count the undertakers and myself as men. It is in this room that I nail up the coffin; the undertakers fetch it, and then — gee-up, driver! — that's the way people go to heaven. An empty box is brought in, and it is carried off with something in it; and that's what a burial is. *De profundis.*"

A horizontal sunbeam illuminated the face of the sleeping Cosette, who opened her lips, and looked like an angel imbibing light. Jean Valjean was gazing at her again, and no longer listened to Fauchelevent.

That he is not heard is no reason for a man's holding his tongue, so the worthy old gardener quietly continued his chatter:

"The grave is dug in the Vaugirard cemetery; people say that it is going to be closed. It is an old cemetery, which is outside the regulations, which has no uniform, and is going to retire on half-pay; it is a pity, for it is convenient.

"I have a friend there, Father Mestienne, the grave-digger. The nuns of this house possess the privilege of being carried to that cemetery at nightfall; there is an order from the prefecture expressly for them. But what events have happened since yesterday! Mother Crucifixion is dead, and Father Madeleine—"

"Is buried," said Jean Valjean, with a sad smile.

Fauchelevent returned the word.

"Well, if you were here altogether, it would be a real burial."

A fourth peal rang out. Fauchelevent quickly took down his knee-cap and put it on.

"This time it is for me. The mother prioress wants me. There, I have pricked myself with the tongue of my buckle. M. Madeleine, don't stir, but wait for me. There is something up; if you are hungry, there is bread, wine, and cheese." And he left the cottage, crying, "Coming, coming!"

Jean Valjean watched him hurrying across the garden as rapidly as his crooked leg would allow, casting a side-long glance at his melon-frames as he went.

Less than ten minutes after, Father Fauchelevent, whose bell put to flight all the nuns whom he passed, tapped gently at a door, and a soft voice answered, "Forever, forever," that is to say, "Come in."

It was the door of the parlour reserved expressly for seeing the gardener, and adjoining the chapter-room. The prioress, seated on the only chair in the room, was waiting for Fauchelevent.

CHAPTER II

FAUCHELEVENT FACES THE DIFFICULTY

TO have an agitated and serious air is peculiar, on critical occasions, to certain characters and professions, and notably to priests and monks. When Fauchelevent entered, this double form of preoccupation was imprinted on the face of the prioress, that charming and learned Mademoiselle de Blémeur, or Mother Innocent, who was usually so cheerful.

The gardener made a timid bow, and remained in the door-way of the cell. The prioress, who was telling her beads, raised her eyes, and said:—

“Oh, it is you, Father Fauvent?”

This abbreviation had been adopted in the convent.

Fauchelevent began his bows again.

“Father Fauvent, I summoned you.”

“Here I am, reverend mother.”

“I wish to speak with you.”

“And I too,” said Fauchelevent, with a boldness which made him tremble inwardly, “have something to say to you, most reverend mother.”

The prioress looked at him.

“Ah, you have a communication to make to me?”

“A request.”

“Well, speak.”

Fauchelevent, the ex-notary, belonged to that class of peasants who possess perfect coolness. A certain skilful ignorance is strength. People do not suspect it, and you take them by storm. During the two years Fauchelevent had lived in the convent, he had made a success in the community; always alone and attending to his gardening, he had nothing else to do but to be curious. Remote as he was from all those veiled women, moving to and fro, he saw nothing before him but an agitation of shadows; but, by dint of constant attention and penetration, he had succeeded in putting flesh on those phantoms, and those corpses lived for him. He was like a deaf man, whose sight grows keener, and like a blind man, whose hearing becomes more acute. He had devoted his whole mind to discovering the meaning of the various peals, and had succeeded, so that this enigmatical and mysterious convent had no secrets for him; and this sphinx whispered all her secrets in his ear. Fauchelevent, while knowing everything, concealed everything, and that was his art; the whole convent believed him to be stupid, and that is a great merit in religion. The vocal mothers valued Fauchelevent, for he was a curious mute,

and inspired confidence. Moreover, he was regular, and only went out when absolutely compelled by the claims of his orchard or kitchen-garden, and this discretion was placed to his credit. But, for all that, he had set two men talking,—the porter in the convent, and he thus knew all the peculiarities of the parlour; and the grave-digger at the cemetery, and thus he knew the singular forms of their burial; so that he possessed a double light about these nuns,—one as to their life and the other as to their death. But he made no abuse of his knowledge, and the congregation were attached to him. Old, lame, seeing nothing, and probably rather deaf; what qualifications! It would be difficult to fill his place.

The good man, with the assurance of one who knows his value, began a rustic address to the prioress, which was rather diffuse, and very artful. He talked at great length of his age, his infirmities, years henceforward reckoning double for him, the growing demands of his work, nights to be passed, as, for instance, like the last, when he was obliged to draw matting over the melon-frames owing to the moon; and he ended with this: “that he had a brother” (the prioress gave a start)—“a brother who was not young” (a second start, but a start of reassurance); “that if leave were granted, this brother would come and live with him and help him; that he was an excellent gardener, and would be of more use to the community than he himself was; and that, on the other hand, if his brother’s services were not accepted, as he, the elder, felt worn out and unequal to his work, he should be compelled, to his great regret, to give up his situation; and that his brother had a little girl whom he would bring with him, and who would be brought up in the house in the love of God, and might—who knew?—become a nun some day.”

When he had finished speaking, the prioress broke off the slipping of her rosary through her fingers, and said:—

“ Could you procure a strong iron bar between this and to-night?”

“ What for?”

"To serve as a crowbar."

"Yes, reverend mother," replied Father Fauchelevant.

The prioress, without adding a syllable, rose and walked into the adjoining room where the chapter was assembled. Fauchelevant was left alone.

CHAPTER III

MOTHER INNOCENT

ABOUT a quarter of an hour passed before the prioress returned, and again seated herself on a chair.

The two speakers appeared preoccupied. We will do our best to record their conversation correctly.

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend mother?"

"Do you know the chapel?"

"I have a little cage in it, where I hear Mass and the offices."

"And have you been into the choir for your work?"

"Two or three times."

"A stone will have to be lifted."

"A heavy one?"

"The one at the side of the altar."

"The slab that closes the vault?"

"Yes."

"That is a job where two men would be useful."

"Mother Ascension, who is as strong as a man, will help you."

"A woman is never a man."

"We have only a woman to help you; every one does what he can. Although Dom. Mabillon gives four hundred and seventeen epistles of Saint Bernard, and Merlonus Horstius gives only three hundred and sixty-seven, I do not despise Merlonus Horstius."

"Nor I."

"Merit lies in working according to your strength. A convent is not a dockyard."

"And a woman is not a man. My brother is a strong fellow."

"And, then, you will have a crowbar."

"It is the only sort of key that fits such locks."

"There is a ring in the stone."

"I will put the crowbar through it."

"And the stone moves on hinges."

"All right, reverend mother; I will open the vault."

"And the four Mother Precentors will help you."

"And when the vault is open?"

"You will shut it again."

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Give me your orders, most reverend mother."

"Fauvent, we place confidence in you."

"I am here to do anything and everything."

"And to hold your tongue about everything."

"Yes, reverend mother."

"When the vault is opened —"

"I will shut it again."

"But, first —"

"What, reverend mother?"

"You must lower something into it."

There was a silence; and the prioress, after a pout of the lower lip, which looked like hesitation, continued:

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend mother?"

"You are aware that a mother died this morning?"

"No."

"Did you not hear the bell?"

"Nothing can be heard at the end of the garden."

"Really, now?"

"I can hardly distinguish my own signal."

"She died at daybreak."

"And besides, this morning the wind did not blow in my direction."

"It was Mother Crucifixion, a blessed saint."

The prioress was silent, moved her lips for a moment, as if in mental prayer, and went on:—

"Three years ago, through merely seeing Mother Crucifixion pray, a Jansenist, Madame de Bethune, became orthodox."

"Oh, yes, now I hear the passing bell, reverend mother."

"The mothers have carried her into the dead-room adjoining the church."

"I know."

"No other man than you can, or ought, to enter that room, so keep careful watch. It would be a fine thing to see a man enter the house of the dead!"

"More often."

"Eh?"

"More often."

"What do you mean?"

"I say, more often."

"More often than what?"

"Reverend mother, I did not say more often than what, but more often."

"I do not understand you; why do you say more often?"

"To agree with you, reverend mother."

"But I did not say more often."

"You did not say it, but I said it to agree with you."

At this moment nine o'clock struck.

"At nine in the morning, and at every hour, praised and adored be the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar," said the prioress.

"Amen," said Fauchelevent.

The hour struck opportunely, for it cut short the "more often."

It is probable that, without this, the prioress and Fauchelevent would never got out of their tangle.

Fauchelevent wiped his forehead, and the prioress gave

another little inward murmur, probably sacred, and then raised her voice.

"In her lifetime, Mother Crucifixion made converts; after her death, she will work miracles."

"She will," said Fauchelevant, falling into step and determined not to trip again.

"Father Fauvent, the community was blessed in Mother Crucifixion. Of course it is not granted to every one to die like Cardinal de Berulle, while saying the holy mass, and to breathe forth one's soul to God while uttering the words *Hanc igitur oblationem*. But, though she did not attain such happiness, Mother Crucifixion had a very blessed death. She retained her senses up to the last moment; she spoke to us, and then conversed with the angels. She gave us her last commands. If you had more faith, and if you had been in her cell, she would have cured your leg merely by touching it. She smiled, and we all felt that she lived again in God; there was paradise in such a death."

Fauchelevant fancied that this was the end of a prayer.

"Amen," he said.

"Father Fauvent, we must do what the dead wish."

The prioress told a few beads. Fauchelevant held his tongue.

Then the lady resumed:—

"I have consulted on this point several ecclesiastics, who labour in our Lord, who turn their attention to the exercise of clerical life, and reap a wonderful harvest."

"Reverend mother, I can hear the knell much better here than in the garden."

"Besides, she is more than a dead woman; she is a saint."

"Like yourself, reverend mother."

"She slept in her coffin for more than twenty years, by express permission of our Holy Father Pius VII."

"The same who crowned the emp— Bonaparte."

For a clever man like Fauchelevant, this recollection was ill-timed. Luckily, the prioress, who was deep in thought, did not hear him, and went on:—

“ Father Fauvent? ”

“ Reverend mother? ”

“ Saint Diodorus, archbishop of Cappadocia, requested that one word only should be inscribed on his tombstone, *Acarus*, which means a worm of the earth; it was done. Is that true? ”

“ Yes, reverend mother.”

“ The blessed Mezzocane, abbot of Aquila, wished to be buried beneath the gallows, and it was done.”

“ That is true.”

“ Saint Terentius, bishop of Porto, where the mouth of the Tiber empties into the sea, ordered that there should be engraved on his tombstone the symbol which was placed on the graves of parricides, in the hope that passers-by would spit on his tomb; and it was done, for the dead must be obeyed.”

“ So be it.”

“ The body of Bernard Guidonis, who was born in France, near Roche Abeille, was, as he ordered, and in defiance of the king of Castile, conveyed to the church of the Dominicans of Limoges, although Bernard Guidonis was bishop of Tuy in Spain. Can you say to the contrary? ”

“ Certainly not, reverend mother.”

“ The fact is attested by Plantavit de la Fosse.”

A few beads were told in silence, and then the prioress resumed:—

“ Father Fauvent, Mother Crucifixion will be buried in the coffin in which she has slept for twenty years.”

“ That is but fair.”

“ It is a continuation of sleep.”

“ Then I shall have to nail her up in that coffin? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And we shall not use the undertaker’s coffin? ”

“ Exactly.”

“ I am at the orders of the most reverend community.”

“ The four Mother Precentors will help you.”

“ To nail up the coffin? I do not want their help.”

"No, to lower it."

"Where?"

"Into the vault."

"What vault?"

"Under the altar."

Fauchelevent started.

"The vault under the altar?"

"Yes."

"But—"

"You will have an iron bar."

"Yes, but—"

"You will lift the stone by passing the bar through the ring."

"But—"

"We must obey the dead. It was the last wish of Mother Crucifixion to be buried in the vault under the chapel altar, not to be placed in unconsecrated ground, and to remain when dead, where she had prayed when living. She asked this of us,—indeed, she ordered it."

"But it is forbidden."

"Forbidden by man, ordered by God."

"Suppose it leaked out?"

"We have confidence in you."

"Oh, I am a stone in your wall."

"The chapter is assembled. The vocal mothers, whom I have just consulted once again, and who are deliberating, have decided that Mother Crucifixion should be interred, according to her wish, under our altar. Only think, Father Fauvent, if miracles were to take place here! What a glory in God for the community! Miracles issue from tombs."

"But, reverend mother, supposing the sanitary commissioner—"

"Saint Benedict II., in a matter of burial, resisted Constantine Pogonatus."

"Still, the inspector—"

"Chonodemairus, one of the seven German kings who entered Gaul during the empire of Constantius, expressly

recognized the right of monks to be buried in religion,—that is to say, beneath the altar."

"But the inspector—"

"The world is as nothing in presence of the cross. Martin, eleventh general of the Carthusians, gave to his order this device, *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis.*"

"Amen," said Fauchelevent, who imperturbably got out of the scrape in this way whenever he heard Latin.

Anybody answers as audience for a person who has been a long time silent. On the day when Gymnastoras, the rhetorician, left prison, with a great many dilemmas and numerous syllogisms in his mind, he stopped before the first tree which he saw, harangued it, and made mighty efforts to convince it. The prioress, whose tongue was usually subject to the dam of silence, and whose reservoir was over-full, rose and exclaimed with the loquacity of an open sluice:—

"I have on my right hand, Benedict, and on my left, Bernard. Who is Bernard? The first abbot of Clairvaux. Fontaines in Burgundy is a blessed spot, because it gave him birth. His father's name was Técelin, his mother's name Alethe. He began at Citeaux, to end in Clairvaux. He was ordained abbot by William de Champeaux, bishop of Chalons sur Saône; he had seven hundred novices, and founded one hundred and sixty monasteries; he overthrew Abelard at the council of Sens in 1140, and Pierre de Bruys and Henry his disciple, as well as an errant sect called the Apostolics; he confounded Arnold of Brescia, crushed the Monk Raoul, the Jew-killer; led the Council of Rheims in 1148; condemned Gilbert de la Porée, the bishop of Poitiers, and Eon de l'Etoile; settled the disputes of princes; enlightened King Louis the Young; advised Pope Eugene III.; regulated the Templars; preached the Crusade; performed two hundred and fifty miracles in his lifetime, and as many as thirty-nine in one day.

"Who is Benedict? He is the patriarch of Monte Cassino; he is the second founder of the Claustral Holiness, the Basil of the West. His order has produced fourteen popes,

two hundred cardinals, fifty patriarchs, sixteen hundred archbishops, forty-six hundred bishops, four emperors, twelve empresses, forty-six kings, forty-one queens, thirty-six hundred canonized saints, and has existed for fourteen hundred years. On one side, Saint Bernard, on the other the sanitary inspector! On one side, Saint Benedict, on the other the inspector of streets! What do we know about the State, the regulations, the administration, and the public undertaker? Any chance passer-by would be indignant at the way in which we are treated. We have not even the right to give our dust to Christ! Your Board of Health is a revolutionary invention. God subordinated to a police inspector; such is the age! Silence, Fauvent!"

Fauchelevant did not feel very comfortable under this shower bath, but the prioress went on:—

"No one doubts the right of the monastery to sepulture. Only fanatics and schismatics deny it. We live in times of terrible confusion. People do not know what they should, and know what they should not. Men are ignorant and impious; and there are persons at the present day who cannot distinguish between the most mighty Saint Bernard and that Bernard called of the poor Catholics, "a certain worthy ecclesiastic who lived in the thirteenth century." Others are so blasphemous as to compare the scaffold of Louis XVI. to the cross of our Saviour. Louis XVI. was only a king. There are no longer just or unjust. The name of Voltaire is known, and that of Cæsar de Bus is unknown; but Cæsar de Bus is blessed, while Voltaire is damned. The last archbishop, Cardinal de Perigord, did not even know that Charles de Gondren succeeded to Berullus, and François Bourgoin to Gondren, and Jean François Senault to Bourgoin, and Father de Sainte Marthe Jean to François Senault. The name of Father Coton is known, not because he was one of the three who urged the foundation of the Oratory, but because he supplied the Huguenot King, Henry IV., with material for an oath. People of the world like Saint Francis de Sales because he cheated at play. And,

then, religion is attacked, and why? Because there have been bad priests, because Sagittarius, bishop of Gap, was brother of Salone, bishop of Embrun, and both followed Mommolus. Of what consequence is all this? Does it prevent Martin of Tours from being a saint, and from giving one-half of his cloak to a poor man? The saints are persecuted; and men close their eyes to the truth. Darkness is the rule; and the most ferocious beasts are blind beasts. No one thinks seriously of hell. Oh, the wicked people! ‘By the king’s order,’ now means, ‘by order of the Revolution.’ People forget what they owe, either to the living or the dead. We are forbidden to die in holiness, burial is a civil affair; this is horrible. Saint Leo II. wrote two letters expressly,—one to Peter Notarius, the other to the king of the Visigoths,—to combat and reject in questions that affect the dead, the authority of the exarchus and the supremacy of the emperor. Gauthier, bishop of Chalons, opposed Otho, Duke of Burgundy, in this matter. The old magistrates agreed with him; we formerly had a voice in the chapter itself, even in temporal affairs. The abbot of Citeaux, general of the order, was councillor *ex officio* in the parliament of Burgundy.

“We do as we please with our dead. Is not the body of Saint Benedict himself in France, at the abbey of Fleury, called St. Benedict on the Loire, although he died at Monte Cassino in Italy, on Saturday, March 21, 543? All this is incontestable. I abhor psalm-singers, I hate prayer-makers, I execrate heretics, but I should detest yet worse any one who opposed my views in this matter. You have only to read Arnoul Wion, Gabriel Bucelinus, Trithe-
mius, Maurolius, and Dom. Luc d’Achery.”

The prioress took a long breath, and then turned to Fauchelevent.

“Father Fauvent, is it settled?”

“It is, reverend mother.”

“Can we reckon on you?”

“I will obey.”

“Very good.”

“I am entirely devoted to the convent.”

“Of course you are. You will close the coffin, and the sisters will carry it into the chapel. The office for the dead will be read, and then we shall return to the cloisters. Between eleven and twelve you will come with your iron bar, and everything will be performed with the utmost secrecy. There will be no one in the chapel but the four Mother Precentors, Mother Ascension, and yourself.”

“And the sister at the stake?”

“She will not turn round.”

“But she will hear.”

“She will not listen. Moreover, what the convent knows the world knows not.” There was another pause, after which the prioress continued, “You will remove your bell, for it is unnecessary that the sister at the stake should note your presence.”

“Reverend mother?”

“What is it, Father Fauvent?”

“Has the physician of the dead paid his visit?”

“He will do so at four o’clock to-day. The bell has been rung to give him notice. Do you never hear the bells?”

“I only pay attention to my own summons.”

“That is well, Father Fauvent.”

“Reverend mother, I shall require a crowbar at least six feet long.”

“Where will you get it?”

“Where there are plenty of gratings, there are plenty of iron bars. I have a pile of old iron at the end of the garden.”

“About three quarters of an hour before midnight; do not forget.”

“Reverend mother?”

“What is it?”

“If you ever have another job like this, my brother is a strong fellow for you,—a perfect Trojan.”

“You will be as quick as possible.”

"I cannot do things quickly, for I am infirm; and that is why I want an assistant. I am lame."

"It is no crime to be lame, and it may be a blessing. The Emperor Henry II., who combated Antipope Gregory and re-established Benedict VIII., has two surnames,—the Saint and the Cripple."

"Two excellent surtouts," muttered Fauchelevent, who was really somewhat hard of hearing.

"Father Fauvent, now I think of it, you had better take a whole hour. That will not be too much. Be at the high altar with your crowbar at eleven o'clock; for the service begins at midnight, and all must be finished a good quarter of an hour before that."

"I will do anything to prove my zeal to the community. It is settled. I will nail up the coffin, and be in the chapel at eleven o'clock precisely. The Mother Precentors and Mother Ascension will be there. Two men would be better, but no matter. I shall have my crowbar, we will open the vault, let down the coffin, and close it again. After that, there will not be a trace of anything, and the government will have no suspicion. Reverend mother, is all arranged thus?"

"No."

"What else is there?"

"There is the empty coffin."

This was a difficulty. Fauchelevent considered, and so did the prioress.

"Father Fauvent, what are we to do with the other coffin?"

"It must be buried."

"Empty?"

Another silence. Fauchelevent made with his left hand that sort of gesture which dismisses a disagreeable subject.

"Reverend mother, I am the one who is to nail up the coffin in the basement of the church, and I will cover it with the pall."

"Yes; but the bearers, when they put it in the hearse

and lower it into the grave, will be sure to discover that there is nothing in it."

"Oh, the d—" exclaimed Fauchelevent.

The prioress began to make the sign of the cross, and looked steadily at the gardener. The —evil stuck in his throat.

He hastily improvised an expedient to make her forget his oath.

"Reverend mother, I will put earth in the coffin. That will produce the effect of a body."

"You are right, for earth is the same as a human being. So you will manage the empty coffin?"

"I will make it my special business."

The face of the prioress, which had hitherto been troubled and clouded, now grew serene. She made the sign of a superior dismissing an inferior, and Fauchelevent moved toward the door. As he was going out, the prioress gently raised her voice.

"Father Fauvent, I am satisfied with you; to-morrow, after the interment, bring me your brother, and tell him to bring me his daughter."

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH JEAN VALJEAN ACTS AS IF HE HAD READ
AUSTIN CASTILLEJO.

THE strides of a lame man are like the sly glances of a one-eyed man,— they do not reach their goal very rapidly. Moreover, Fauchelevent was perplexed; and he spent upward of a quarter of an hour in returning to his garden cottage. Cosette was awake, and Jean Valjean had seated her by the fireside. When Fauchelevent entered, Valjean was pointing to the gardener's basket hanging on the wall, and saying to her:—

"Listen to me carefully, little Cosette. We are obliged to leave this house, but we shall return to it, and be very happy. The good man who lives here will carry you off upon his back in that thing, and you will wait for me with a lady till I come to fetch you. If you do not wish Madame Thénardier to catch you again, obey and say not a word."

Cosette gravely nodded her head.

At the sound Fauchelevent made in opening the door, Valjean turned.

"Well?"

"All is arranged, and nothing is," said Fauchelevent. "I have leave to bring you in; but before I can bring you in, you must go out. That is the difficulty; it is easy enough with the little one."

"You will carry her out?"

"Will she be quiet?"

"I answer for that."

"But you, Father Madeleine?" And, after an anxious silence, Fauchelevent cried: "Why, go out in the same way as you came in."

Jean Valjean, as on the first occasion confined himself to saying "Impossible!"

Fauchelevent speaking to himself rather than to Jean Valjean, growled:—

"There is another thing that bothers me. I said that I would put earth in it; but now I come to think of it, earth instead of a body will not do, for it will not keep in place. It will move about, and the men will hear it. You understand, Father Madeleine, the government will discover the trick?"

Jean Valjean looked him in the eye, and fancied that he must be raving.

Fauchelevent continued:—

"How the deuce are you to get out, for everything must be settled by to-morrow! I am to bring you in to-morrow. The prioress expects you then."

Then he explained to Valjean that this was the reward

for a service which he, Fauchelevent, was to render to the community. It was part of his duty to attend to the funerals, nail up the coffin, and assist the grave-digger at the cemetery. The nun who had died that morning had requested to be buried in the coffin which had served her as bed, in the vault under the altar of the chapel. This was forbidden by the police regulations, but she was one of those women to whom nothing is refused. The prioress and the Mother Precentors intended to carry out the wishes of the deceased, and so much the worse for the government. He, Fauchelevent, was to nail up the coffin in the cell, lift the stone in the chapel, and lower the body into the vault. As a reward, the prioress would admit his brother to the house as gardener, and his niece as boarder. The prioress had told him to bring his brother next day, after the pretended funeral; but he could not bring M. Madeleine in from outside, if he were not outside. This was his first embarrassment; and then there was another problem,—the empty coffin.

"What do you mean by the empty coffin?" asked Valjean.

Fauchelevent replied:—

"Why, the government coffin."

"I do not understand you."

"A nun dies, and the city physician comes and says: 'A nun has died.' Government sends a coffin. The next day it sends a hearse and undertaker's men to fetch the coffin and carry it to the cemetery. The undertaker's men will come and lift the coffin; and there will be nothing in it."

"Put something in it."

"A dead person? I haven't such a thing."

"Well, then a living one."

"Who?"

"Myself," said Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevent, who was seated, sprang up as if a shell had exploded under his chair.

"You?"

"Why not?" Jean Valjean smiled one of those rare smiles which resemble a sunbeam in a wintry sky. "You know that you said, Fauchelevent, 'Mother Crucifixion is dead; ' and I added, 'And Father Madeleine is buried.' It shall be so."

"Oh, you are joking; you are not speaking seriously."

"Most seriously. Must I not get out of here?"

"Of course."

"I told you to find a basket and a cover for me too."

"Well?"

"The basket will be of deal, and the cover of black cloth."

"No, white cloth. Nuns are buried in white."

"All right, then, white cloth."

"You are not like other men, Father Madeleine."

To see such ideas, which are nought but the wild and daring inventions of the hulks, issue from his peaceful surroundings and mingle with what he called "the slow pace of the convent," produced in Fauchelevent a stupor comparable to that which a passer-by would feel on seeing a gull fishing in the gutter of the Rue de St. Denis.

Jean Valjean went on:—

"The point is to get out of here unseen, and this is a way. But just tell me, how is it all to be managed? Where is this coffin?"

"The empty one?"

"Yes."

"In what is called the dead-house. The coffin stands upon two trestles, and is covered with the pall."

"What is the length of the coffin?"

"Six feet."

"What is this dead-house?"

"A ground-floor room with a grated window looking on the garden, which is closed on the outside with a shutter. It has two doors, one leading to the church, the other to the convent."

"What church?"

"The street church,—the one open to everybody."

"Have you the keys of these doors?"

"No; I have the key of the one communicating with the convent, but the porter has the other."

"When does he open it?"

"Only to let the men pass who come to fetch the body. When the coffin has gone out, the door is locked again."

"Who nails up the coffin?"

"I do."

"Who places the pall over it?"

"I do."

"Are you alone?"

"No other man, except the doctor, is allowed to enter the dead-house. It is even written on the wall."

"Could you hide me in that house to-night when all are asleep in the convent?"

"No; but I can hide you in a dark hole opening out of the dead-house, where I put the burial tools, and of which I have the key."

"At what hour to-morrow will the hearse come to fetch the body?"

"At three in the afternoon. The interment takes place at the Vaugirard cemetery a little before nightfall. It is not very near here."

"I will remain concealed in your tool-house all night and all the morning. How about food? for I shall be hungry."

"I will bring you some."

"You can nail me up in the coffin at two o'clock."

Fauchelevent shrank back and cracked his finger-joints.

"Oh, it is impossible!"

"Nonsense! to take a hammer and drive nails into a board?"

What seemed to Fauchelevent extraordinary, was, we repeat, quite simple to Jean Valjean, for he had been in worse straits than this; and any man who has been a prisoner knows how to reduce himself to the diameter of the mode of escape. A prisoner is subject to flight just as a sick man is to a crisis which saves or destroys him; and an escape is a cure. What

will not a man undergo for the sake of being cured? To be nailed up in a box and carried off like a bale of goods, to live for a long time in a packing-case, to find air where there is none, to economize his breath for hours, to manage to choke without dying, were some of Jean Valjean's melancholy talents.

Besides, a coffin in which there is a living body,—that convict's expedient,—is also an imperial expedient. If we may believe the monk Austin Castillejo, this was the means employed by Charles V., who, wishing to see La Plombes for the last time after his abdication, contrived to get her brought in and out of the monastery of St. Yuste in this way.

Fauchelevent, when he had slightly recovered, exclaimed:—

“ But how will you manage to breathe? ”

“ I will manage it.”

“ In that box? Why, the mere idea of it chokes me.”

“ You have a gimlet. You can make a few holes here and there round my mouth and nail down the lid rather loosely.”

“ Good! and suppose you cough or sneeze.”

“ A man who is escaping does not cough or sneeze.” And Jean Valjean added: “ Father Fauchelevent, we must make up our minds. I must either be captured here or go out in the hearse.”

Everybody must have noticed the fancy which cats have for stopping and sniffing in a half-open door, and most of us have said to a cat, “ Pray come in.” There are men who, when an incident stands half-open before them, have also a tendency to remain undecided between two resolutions, at the risk of being crushed by destiny as it hurriedly closes the adventure. The over prudent, cats though they are, and because they are cats, often incur greater danger than the more daring. Fauchelevent was of this hesitating nature. Still, Jean Valjean's coolness involuntarily mastered him, and he growled:

“ After all, there is no other way.”

Valjean continued:—

"The only thing I am anxious about, is what will take place at the cemetery."

"That is the very thing I am not anxious about," said Fauchelevent. "If you feel sure of getting out of the coffin all right, I feel sure of getting you out of the grave. The grave-digger is a friend of mine, and a drunkard, by the name of Father Mestienne. He puts the dead in the grave, and I put the grave-digger in my pocket. I will tell you what will happen. We shall arrive a little before twilight, three quarters of an hour before the cemetery gates are closed. The hearse will drive up to the grave, and I shall follow; for that is my business. I shall have a hammer, a chisel, and pincers in my pocket. The hearse stops, the undertaker ties a rope round your coffin and lets you down; the priest says the prayers, makes the sign of the cross, sprinkles the holy water, and bolts. I remain alone with Father Mestienne; and he is a friend of mine, I tell you. One of two things is certain; he will either be drunk or not be drunk. If he is not drunk, I shall say to him, 'Come and have a drain before the Good Quince closes.' I take him away, make him drunk, which does not take long, as he has always made a beginning; I lay him under the table, take his card, so that I can get into the cemetery again, and I return without him. You will have only me to deal with. If he is drunk, I shall say to him, 'Be off! I will do your work for you.' He will go, and I get you out of the hole."

Jean Valjean held out his hand, which Father Fauchelevent seized with the touching devotion of a true peasant.

"It is settled, Father Fauchelevent. All will go well."

"Providing that nothing goes wrong," thought Fauchelevent; "suppose the affair were to have a terrible ending!"

CHAPTER V

A DRUNKARD IS NOT NECESSARILY IMMORTAL

NEXT day, as the sun was setting, the few passers-by on the Boulevard du Maine took off their hats to an old-fashioned hearse, ornamented with skulls, thigh-bones, and tears. In this hearse was a coffin covered with a white pall, on which lay an enormous black cross, like a tall dead woman with hanging arms. A mourning coach, in which sat a priest in his surplice, and a chorister in his red cap, followed. Two mutes in gray uniform with black facings walked on the right and left of the hearse, while behind them came an old man in workman's garb, who was lame. The procession proceeded toward the Vaugirard cemetery.

Projecting from the workman's pocket, were the handle of a hammer, the blade of a chisel, and a pair of pincers.

This cemetery formed an exception to the cemeteries of Paris. It had its peculiar usages, just as it had a carriage entrance and a side entrance, which old persons in the quarter, tenacious of old names, called the horseman's gate and the footman's gate. The Cistercian-Benedictines of Little Picpus had obtained, as we have stated, permission to be buried there in a corner apart, and by night, because the cemetery had formerly belonged to their community. The grave-diggers, having thus an evening duty in summer and a night duty in winter, were subject to special rules. The gates of Parisian cemeteries were closed at that period at sunset; and as this was a police measure, the Vaugirard cemetery was subject to it like the rest. The two gates adjoined a pavilion built by the architect Perronet, in which the porter lived, and they were inexorably closed at the moment when the sun disappeared behind the dome of the Invalides. If any grave-digger were detained after that moment in the cemetery, he had only one way to get out,— his card, with which

the undertaker's department supplied him. There was a sort of letter-box in the shutter of the porter's window. The grave digger threw his card into this box; the porter heard it fall, pulled the string, and the small gate opened. If the grave-digger had not his card, he gave his name. The porter, who was sometimes asleep in bed, got up, identified him, and opened the gate with his key. The grave-digger got out, but he had to pay a fine of fifteen francs.

This cemetery, with regulations of its own, was a flaw on administrative symmetry, and it was suppressed shortly after 1830. The cemetery of Mont Parnasse, known as the Eastern Cemetery, succeeded it, and inherited the famous dram-shop attached to the Vaugirard cemetery, surmounted by a quince painted on a board, one side of which tavern looked out on the drinking-tables, the other on the tombs, with this sign: The Good Quince (*Au Bon Coing*).

It was what might be called a faded cemetery, and it was falling into decay. Green mould was invading it, and the flowers deserted it. Respectable tradesmen did not care to be buried at Vaugirard, for it had a poverty-stricken smell. *Père Lachaise*, if you like! To be buried there was like having a suit of mahogany furniture. The Vaugirard cemetery was a venerable enclosure, laid out like an old French garden. It had straight walks, box-trees, holly-trees, old tombs under old yew-trees, and very tall grass. At night it was a tragical-looking spot.

The sun had not yet set when the hearse with the white pall and black cross entered the avenue of this cemetery, and the limping man who followed it was no other than Fauchelevent.

The interment of Mother Crucifixion in the vault under the altar, Cosette's exit, and Jean Valjean's introduction to the dead-house, had been effected without the slightest hitch.

Let us say, in passing, that the burial of Mother Crucifixion beneath the altar is to our mind a very venial thing, and one of those faults which resemble a duty. The nuns had accomplished it, not only without feeling troubled, but with

the applause of their own consciences. In a convent, what is called "the government" is only an interference with authority,—an interference which is always questionable. First comes the rule,—as for the code, time enough for that. Men, make as many laws as you please, but keep them for yourselves. Tribute to Cæsar comes after tribute to God, and a prince is nothing in the presence of a principle.

Fauchelevent limped after the hearse with great satisfaction; his twin plots—the one with the nuns, the other with M. Madeleine; one for, the other against, the convent—were getting on famously. The calmness of Valjean was one of those powerful tranquillities which are contagious, and Fauchelevent no longer doubted of success.

What he still had to do was a mere nothing. During the last two years he had made the grave-digger drunk a dozen times; it was child's play. He could do what he liked with Father Mestienne. He made him dance to his own tune. Mestienne's head exactly fitted Fauchelevent's cap. The gardener's security was complete.

When the procession entered the avenue leading to the cemetery, Fauchelevent looked at the hearse with delight, and rubbed his huge hands as he said half aloud:—

"What a lark!"

All at once the hearse stopped. It had reached the gates, and the burial permit must be shown. The undertaker conversed with the porter; and during this colloquy, which occupied two or three minutes, a stranger stationed himself behind the hearse at Fauchelevent's side. He was a sort of workman, wearing a jacket with wide pockets, and had a spade under his arm.

Fauchelevent looked at the stranger, and asked:—

"Who are you?"

The man replied:—

"The grave-digger."

If a man could survive a cannon-ball right in the middle of his chest, he would cut such a face as Fauchelevent did.

“The grave-digger.”

“Yes.”

“You.”

“I!”

“Why, Father Mestienne is the grave-digger.”

“Was.”

“How, *was?*”

“He is dead.”

Fauchelevent was prepared for everything except this, that a grave-digger could die; and yet it is true that grave-diggers themselves die.

While digging holes for others, they prepare one for themselves.

Fauchelevent stood with wide open mouth, and had scarce strength to stammer:—

“Why, it is impossible!”

“It is so.”

“But the grave-digger,” he went on feebly, “is Father Mestienne.”

“After Napoleon, Louis XVIII. After Mestienne, Gribier. Rustic, my name is Gribier.”

Fauchelevent, pale as ashes, stared at Gribier.

He was a tall, thin, livid, thoroughly funereal man. He looked like a broken-down doctor who had turned grave-digger.

Fauchelevent burst into a laugh.

“Ah, what funny things do happen! Father Mestienne is dead. Little Father Mestienne is dead, but long live little Father Lenoir! Do you know who he is? He is a jug of red wine. A jug of Surène, by Jove! Real Paris Surène. And so Father Mestienne is dead. I feel sorry for him. He was a jolly fellow. But you are a jolly fellow too, are you not, comrade? We will drink a glass together, eh?”

The man answered, “I have been at college, and I never drink.”

The hearse had set out again, and was now going along the main avenue.

Fauchelevent had decreased his pace, and limped more through anxiety than infirmity.

The grave-digger walked in front of him, and Fauchelevent once again surveyed this unknown Gribier.

He was one of those men who, when young, look old, and who, though thin, are very strong.

"Comrade!" cried Fauchelevent. The man turned round. "I am the convent grave-digger."

"My colleague," said the man.

Fauchelevent, uneducated but very sharp, understood that he had to deal with a formidable species,—a fine talker; he growled:—

"So then, Father Mestienne is dead."

The man answered, "Completely. The good God consulted his bill-book. Father Mestienne was due, and so Father Mestienne is dead."

Fauchelevent repeated mechanically, "The good God."

"The good God," the man said authoritatively,—to philosophers, the Eternal Father; to Jacobins, the Supreme Being."

"Shall we not make acquaintance?" stammered Fauchelevent.

"It is made. You are a rustic, I am a Parisian."

"Men never know one another thoroughly till they have drunk together; for when a man empties his glass he empties his heart. You will come and drink with me; such an offer cannot be refused."

"Work first."

Fauchelevent thought, "It's all over with me."

They had only a few more yards to go before reaching the nun's corner. The grave-digger added:—

"Peasant, I have seven children to feed; and as they must eat, I must not drink." And he added, with the satisfaction of a serious man who is laying down an axiom: "Their hunger is the enemy of my thirst."

The hearse rolled by a clump of cypress-trees, left the main avenue, turned down a smaller one, and entered a

thicket, which indicated the immediate proximity of the grave. Fauchelevent slackened his pace, but could not reduce that of the hearse. Fortunately the ground, saturated with winter rains, clogged the wheels, and rendered its progress slower. He drew closer to the grave-digger.

"There is such a capital little Argenteuil wine," he muttered.

"Villager," replied the man, "I was not meant for a grave-digger. My father was porter at the Prytanæum, and destined me for literature; but he was unfortunate in his speculations on the Exchange. Hence I was compelled to relinquish the profession of author, but I am still a public writer."

"Then you are not a grave-digger?" Fauchelevent retorted, clinging to this very feeble branch.

"The one does not prevent the other; I double the parts—"

Fauchelevent did not understand the last phrase.

"Let us take a drink," he said.

Here a remark is necessary. Fauchelevent, however great his agony might be, proposed drinking, but did not explain himself on one point. Who was to pay? As a general rule Fauchelevent proposed and Father Mestienne paid. A proposal to drink was the evident result of the novel situation created by the new grave-digger and that proposal the gardener must make; but he left, not undesignedly, the proverbial quarter of an hour named for Rabelais, in obscurity. However much moved Fauchelevent might be, he did not feel anxious to pay.

The grave-digger continued with a superior smile:—

"As a man must live, I accept Father Mestienne's inheritance. When a man has nearly completed his course of studies he is a philosopher, and I add the work of my arms to that of my hand. I have my writer's stall in the market on the Rue de Sèvres,—you know, the Umbrella Market? All the cooks of the Croix Rouge apply to me, and I scrawl their declarations of love to the soldiers. In the morning I

write love-letters, in the evening I dig graves; such is life, rustic."

The hearse went on, and Fauchelevent gazed about him in the greatest anxiety; big drops of perspiration trickled down his forehead.

"Still," continued the grave-digger, "a man cannot serve two mistresses; and I must choose between the pick and the pen. The pick is ruining my hand."

The hearse stopped.

The choir boy got out of the coach, and then the priest; one of the small front wheels of the hearse was slightly raised by a heap of earth, beyond which was an open grave.

"Here's a go!" said Fauchelevent in consternation.

CHAPTER VI

BETWEEN FOUR PLANKS

WHO was in the coffin? It was, as we know, Jean Valjean..

He had so contrived as to be able to live in it, and he could almost breathe.

It is a strange thing to what an extent security of conscience produces other security; the whole combination pre-meditated by Valjean had been going on since the previous evening, and was still going on excellently. He calculated, like Fauchelevent, upon Father Mestienne, and never dreamed what the end would be. Never was a situation more critical or a composure more complete.

The four planks of a coffin exhale a terrible peace; and it seemed as if some of the repose of the dead were blended with Valjean's tranquillity.

From the bottom of this coffin he had been able to follow,

and did follow, all the phases of the dreadful drama which he was playing with death.

Soon after Fauchelevent had finished nailing down the coffin lid, Valjean felt himself raised and then carried along. Through the cessation of the jolting, he knew when they passed from the pavement to trodden earth,—that is to say; when the hearse left the streets, and turned into the boulevards. From the hollow sound, he guessed that he was crossing the bridge of Austerlitz; at the first halt, he understood that he was entering the cemetery, and at the second, he said to himself, “Here is the grave.”

Suddenly he felt hands seize the coffin, and then heard a grating against the planks; he guessed that a rope was being fastened round the coffin to lower it into the grave.

After this, he felt dizzy.

In all probability, the men had handled the coffin carelessly, and let the head down before the foot. He recovered himself fully when he found himself horizontal and motionless.

He felt a certain sense of cold.

A chill and solemn voice rose above him, and he heard Latin words, which he did not understand, uttered so slowly that he could distinguish each in turn.

“*Qui dormiunt in terræ pulvere, evigilabunt; alii in vitam æternam, et alii in opprobri ut videant semper.*”

A boyish voice said:—

“*De profundis.*”

The grave voice began again:—

“*Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine.*”

The boyish voice replied:—

“*Et lux perpetua luceat ei!*”

He heard something like the gentle splash of rain upon the coffin lid; it was, probably, the holy water.

He thought, “It is almost over now, and I only need a little patience. The priest will go, and Fauchelevent take Mestienne off to drink. I shall be left here till Fauchelevent returns alone, and I shall get out. It will take about an hour.”

The grave voice continued:—

“Requiescat in pace.”

And the boyish voice said:—

“Amen.”

Jean Valjean strained his ears and heard something like the sound of retreating footsteps.

“They are going,” he thought. “I am alone.”

All at once he heard over his head a noise which sounded to him like a thunder-clap.

It was a spadeful of earth falling on the coffin.

A second spadeful fell, and one of the holes by which he breathed was stopped.

A third shovelful fell, and then a fourth.

There are some things stronger than the strongest man, and Jean Valjean lost his senses.

CHAPTER VII

ORIGIN OF THE PHRASE, “DON’T LOSE THE CARD”

THIS is what took place above the coffin which contained Jean Valjean.

When the hearse had gone, when the priest and the chorister had driven off in the coach, Fauchelevent, who did not once take his eyes from the grave-digger, saw him stoop and seize the spade, which was standing upright in the heap of earth.

Fauchelevent formed a supreme resolution; he placed himself between the grave and the digger, folded his arms, and said:—

“I’ll pay.”

The grave-digger looked at him in amazement, and replied:—

“What, peasant?”

Fauchelevent repeated.

"I'll pay for the wine."

"What wine?"

"The Argenteuil."

"Where is it?"

"At the Good Quince!"

"Go to the devil!" said the grave-digger. And he threw a spadeful of earth on the coffin.

The coffin uttered a hollow sound. Fauchelevent tottered, and was himself ready to fall into the grave. He cried, in a voice with which the strangling sound of the death-rattle was mingled:—

"Come along, mate, before the Good Quince closes." The grave-digger filled his spade again; Fauchelevent continued, "I'll pay;" and he seized the grave-digger's arm. "Listen to me, mate; I am the convent grave-digger, and have come to help you. It is a job which can be done by night, so let us begin by taking a glass."

And as he spoke, as he clung to this desperate entreaty, he made the melancholy reflection, "And suppose he does drink, will he get drunk?"

"Provincial," said the grave-digger, "since you are so pressing, I consent. We will drink, but after work, never before." And he raised his spade, but Fauchelevent held him back.

"It is Argenteuil wine."

"Why," said the grave-digger, "you must be a bell-ringer. Ding, dong, ding, dong,—that's all you know how to say. Go hang yourself!" And he threw the second shovelful.

Fauchelevent had reached the point where he no longer knew what he was saying.

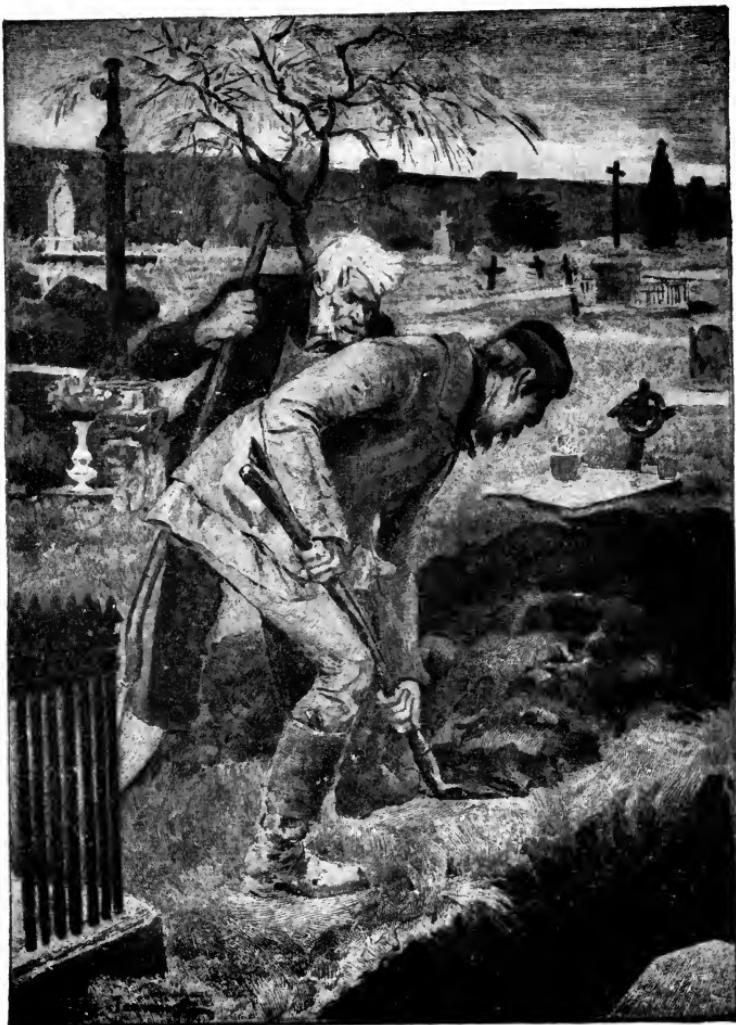
"Come along and drink," he cried, "since I offer to pay."

"When we have put the child to bed," said Gribier.

He threw the third spadeful.

Then he added, as he dug the shovel into the ground:

"It will be very cold to-night, and the dead woman would



"At this moment, as he filled his spade he stooped, and his waistcoat-pocket gaped."

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hullo after us if we were to leave her here without a blanket."

At this moment, as he filled his spade he stooped, and his waistcoat-pocket gaped.

Fauchelevent's wandering glance fell mechanically into that pocket, and remained there.

The sun was not yet hidden behind the horizon, and there was still sufficient light to enable him to distinguish something white at the bottom of that gaping pocket.

All the brightness of which a Picardy peasant's eye is capable glistened in Fauchelevent's eye; an idea had struck him.

Unnoticed by the grave-digger, he thrust his hand into the pocket from behind, and drew out the white thing which lay at the bottom.

The grave-digger threw the fourth shovelful into the grave; and as he turned to raise a fifth, Fauchelevent looked at him with profound calmness, and said:—

"By the way, my novice, have you your card?"

The grave-digger paused.

"What card?"

"The sun is just going to set."

"Very good, it can put on its nightcap."

"The cemetery gates will be shut."

"Well, and what then?"

"Have you your card?"

"Ah, my card!" said the grave-digger; and he felt in one pocket and then in another, he passed to his fobs and turned them inside out. "No," he said, "I have not got my card; I must have forgotten it."

"Fifteen francs fine," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger turned green, for the pallor of livid men is green.

"Oh Lord, have mercy upon me!" he exclaimed; "fifteen francs fine!"

"Three one-hundred-sous pieces," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger let his shovel fall.

Fauchelevent's turn had come.

"Come, conscript," said the old gardener; "no despair; you need not take advantage of the grave to commit suicide. Fifteen francs are fifteen francs, and, besides, you can avoid paying them. I am old and you a new-comer, and I am up to all the tricks and dodges. I will give you a piece of friendly advice. One thing is clear, the sun is setting,—it is touching the dome now; and the cemetery will be closed in five minutes."

"That is true."

"Five minutes will not be enough for you to fill up this grave, which is deuced deep, and to reach the gates in time to get out before they close."

"Perfectly correct."

"In that case, fifteen francs fine. But you have time. Where do you live?"

"Hardly a quarter of an hour's walk from here, at No. 87, Rue de Vaugirard."

"You have just time enough to get out, if you look sharp."

"So I have."

"Once outside the gates, you will gallop home and fetch your card; and when you return, the porter will open the gate for you gratis. And you will bury your dead woman, whom I will keep from running away during your absence."

"I owe you my life, peasant."

"Be off at once," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger, who was beside himself with gratitude, shook Fauchelevent's hand and ran off.

When he had disappeared behind a clump of trees, Fauchelevent listened till his footsteps died away, then bent over the grave and said in a low voice:—

"Father Madeleine!"

There was no reply.

Fauchelevent trembled; he tumbled all of a heap into the grave, threw himself on the coffin-lid, and cried:—

"Are you there?"

There was silence in the coffin, and Fauchelevent, who could

scarcely breathe for trembling, took out his chisel and hammer and pried off the coffin-lid.

He could see Valjean's face in the twilight, pale, and with closed eyes.

The gardener's hair stood on end; he sprang to his feet, and then fell against the side of the grave. He gazed at Jean Valjean, who lay livid and motionless.

Fauchelevent murmured in a voice faint as a sigh:—

"He is dead!" And drawing himself up, he folded his arms so violently that his clenched fists struck his shoulders, and cried, "That is the way in which I save him!"

Then the poor old man began to sob and soliloquize, for it is a mistake to suppose that there is no soliloquy in nature. Powerful emotion often talks aloud.

"It is Father Mestienne's fault. Why did that ass die? What occasion was there for him to go off the hooks so unexpectedly? It is he who has killed Monsieur Madeleine. Father Madeleine! he is in his coffin, and it is all over with him. Now, is there any common sense in this? Oh, my goodness, he is dead! Well, and what shall I do with his little girl? What will the green-grocer say? Is it possible that such a man can die in such a way? When I think how he got under my cart! Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! By heavens, he is suffocated, as I said he would be, and he would not believe me. Well, this is a pretty trick for me to play. The worthy man is dead, the best man among all God's good people! And his little one! Well, I sha'n't go back to the convent, but stop here. To have done such a thing as this! it is not worth while being two old men to be two old fools. But how did he manage to get into the convent? That was the beginning, and a man ought not to do things like that. Father Madeleine, Madeleine, Monsieur Madeleine, Mr. Mayor. He does not hear me. Get out of it now as best you can." And he tore his hair.

A shrill grating sound was heard at a distance through the trees; it was the closing of the cemetery gate. Fauchelevent bent over Jean Valjean, and all at once bounded

back to the farther end of the grave; Jean Valjean's eyes were open and staring at him.

If to see a dead body be fearful, to see a resurrection is nearly as frightful. Fauchelevent became like stone. He was pale, haggard, confounded by such excess of emotion, not knowing whether he had to do with a dead man or a living man, and staring at Valjean, who looked at him.

"I fell asleep," said Valjean; and he sat up.

Fauchelevent sank on his knees. "Holy Virgin, how you frightened me!" Then he rose and cried, "Thank you, Father Madeleine."

Valjean had only fainted, and the fresh air revived him.

Joy is the reflux of terror, and Fauchelevent had almost as much difficulty in recovering himself as had Valjean.

"Then you are not dead! Oh, what a clever fellow you are! I called to you so often that you came back. When I saw your eyes shut, I said, 'There, he is suffocated!' I should have gone stark mad,—fit for a strait-waistcoat; and they would have put me in Bicêtre. What do you think I should have done if you were dead? And your little girl? The green-grocer's wife would not have understood it at all. A child is left upon her hands, and the grandfather is dead!"

"What a story! Oh, my good saints in paradise, what a story! Well, you are alive,—that's the great thing."

"I am cold," said Valjean.

This remark completely recalled Fauchelevent to reality, which was urgent. These two men, who had scarce recovered, were troubled, they knew not why; and there was something strange about them which emanated from the gloomy place where they were.

"Let us get out of this at once," said Fauchelevent. He felt in his pocket and produced a flask. "But take a dram first," he said.

The flask completed what the fresh air had begun. Valjean drank a mouthful of spirits and regained perfect possession of himself.

He got out of the coffin, and helped Fauchelevent to nail on the lid again.

Three minutes later they were out of the grave.

Fauchelevent was calm, and took his time. The cemetery was closed, and there was no fear of Gribier returning. That "conscript" was at home, busily seeking his card, and much hindered from finding it because it was in Fauchelevent's pocket. Without it he could not return to the cemetery.

Fauchelevent took the spade, and Jean Valjean the pick, and together they buried the empty coffin. When the grave was filled up, Fauchelevent said: —

"Come along; you carry the pick and I will carry the spade."

Night was falling.

Jean Valjean found some difficulty in moving and in walking; for in the coffin he had grown stiff, and become to some extent a corpse. The rigidity of death had seized upon him between those four planks, and he must, so to speak, become thawed out.

"You are stiff," said Fauchelevent; "it is a pity that I am a cripple, or we would have a run."

"Nonsense!" said Valjean; "half a dozen strides will make my legs all right again."

They went along the avenues by which the hearse had passed, and on reaching the gate Fauchelevent threw the grave-digger's card into the box; the porter pulled the string, the gate opened, and they went out.

"How famously it has all gone," said Fauchelevent; "that was an excellent idea of yours, Father Madeleine!"

They passed through the Vaugirard barrier in the simplest way in the world; for in the vicinity of a cemetery a spade and a pick are two passports.

The Rue de Vaugirard was deserted.

"Father Madeleine," said Fauchelevent, as they walked along, "you have better eyes than I have, so show me No. 87."

"Here it is," said Valjean.

"There is no one in the street," continued Fauchelevent; "give me the pick, and wait for me a couple of minutes."

Fauchelevent entered No. 87, went right to the top, guided by that instinct which ever leads the poor man to the garret, and rapped at a door, in the dark.

A voice replied, "Come in." It was Gribier's voice.

Fauchelevent pushed the door. The grave-digger's room was like all such wretched abodes,—an impoverished and crowded garret. A packing-case—possibly a coffin—occupied the place of a chest of drawers, a butter-jar was the water-cistern, a straw mattress represented the bed, while on the floor took the place of chairs and table. In one corner, on an old ragged piece of carpet, were a thin woman and a heap of children.

The whole of this poor interior displayed signs of a convulsion, and it seemed as if an earthquake "for one" had taken place. The blankets were torn away, the rags scattered about, the jug was broken, the mother had been crying, and the children had probably been beaten; there was evident signs of an obstinate and ill-tempered search. It was plain that the grave-digger had been looking wildly for his card, and had made everything in the garret responsible for it, from his jug to his wife.

He looked desperate, but Fauchelevent was too eager to end this adventure to notice the sad side of his success; he entered and said:—

"I have brought you your spade and pick."

Gribier looked at him in stupefaction.

"Is it you, peasant?"

"And to-morrow morning you will find your card with the porter of the cemetery." And he placed the shovel and pick on the floor.

"What does this mean?" asked Gribier.

"It means that you let your card fall out of your pocket, that I found it on the ground when you had left, that I have buried the dead woman, filled up the grave, done your

work; the porter will give you your card, and you will not pay fifteen francs. That's what it means, conscript!"

"Thanks, villager," said Gribier, quite dazzled; "next time I will pay for a bottle."

CHAPTER VIII

A SUCCESSFUL EXAMINATION

AN hour later, two men and a child presented themselves in the darkness of night at No. 62, Little Rue Picpus. The elder of the two men raised the knocker and rapped.

They were Fauchelevent, Jean Valjean and Cosette.

The two men had fetched Cosette from the green-grocer's shop, where Fauchelevent had left her on the previous evening. Cosette had spent the four-and-twenty hours in understanding nothing, and silently trembling; she trembled so greatly that she did not cry, nor had she eaten or slept. The worthy green-grocer had asked her a hundred questions, but had only obtained as answer a gloomy look, ever the same. Cosette did not breathe a syllable of what she had seen or heard during the last two days; for she guessed that she was passing through a crisis, and felt deeply that she must be "good." Who has not experienced the sovereign power of the words, "say nothing," uttered with a certain accent in the ear of a startled little being? Fear is dumb; besides, no one can keep a secret like a child.

But when she saw Jean Valjean again at the end of these mournful four-and-twenty hours, she uttered such a cry of joy that any thoughtful person who had heard it, would have divined in that cry an escape from a gulf.

Fauchelevent belonged to the convent, and knew all the passwords, hence doors readily opened to him; and thus was solved the double and startling problem, "how to get in, and how to get out."

The porter, who had his instructions, opened the little gate which connected the courtyard and the garden, in the wall of the former, facing the gate-way, which might still be seen from the street twenty years ago.

The porter showed the three through this gate, and thence they reached the inner private parlour where Fauchelevent had received the orders of the prioress on the previous day.

The prioress was waiting for them, rosary in hand, and a vocal mother, with her veil down, stood beside her.

A discreet candle lit up, or, to speak more correctly, pretended to light up, the parlour.

The prioress passed Valjean in review, for no eye examines like a downcast one.

Then she questioned him.

“Are you the brother?”

“Yes, reverend mother,” answered Fauchelevent.

“What is your name?”

Fauchelevent answered: “Ultimus Fauchelevent.”

He had really had a brother of that name, who was dead.

“Where do you come from?”

Fauchelevent: From Piequigny, near Amiens.”

“What is your age?”

Fauchelevent: “Fifty.”

“What is your trade?”

Fauchelevent: “Gardener.”

“Are you a good Christian?”

Fauchelevent: “All the members of our family are.”

“Is this little girl yours?”

Fauchelevent: “Yes, reverend mother.”

“Are you her father?”

Fauchelevent: “Her grandfather.”

The vocal mother said to the prioress in a whisper:

“He answers well.”

Jean Valjean had not said a word.

The prioress looked attentively at Cosette, and whispered to the vocal mother:—

“She will grow up ugly.”

The two mothers consulted for a few minutes in very low voices in a corner of the parlour, and then the prioress turned and said:—

“Father Fauvent, you will get another knee-cap and bell, for two will be required in future.”

On the morrow, therefore, two bells were heard in the garden, and the nuns could not resist the temptation to raise one corner of their veils. They saw, under the shade of the trees, at the far end of the garden, two men digging side by side,—Fauvent and another. It was an enormous event, and silence was so far broken that they whispered: “He is an assistant gardener,” while the vocal mothers added: “He is a brother of Father Fauvent.”

Jean Valjean was, in fact, permanently installed; he had a leathern knee-cap and bell, and was henceforth official. His name was Ultimus Fauchelevent.

The most powerful determining cause of his admission was the remark of the prioress with reference to Cosette,—*she will grow up ugly.*

The prioress, once she had prognosticated this, felt an affection for Cosette, and gave her a place in the school as a charity pupil.

This is very logical, after all; for, although there may be no looking-glasses in a convent, women are conscious of their faces. Now, girls who know that they are pretty are disinclined to take the veil; and as inclination is generally in inverse ratio to beauty, more is to be hoped from ugly than from pretty girls. Hence a strong taste for ugly girls.

All this adventure added to the importance of Fauchelevent, for he had won a threefold success,—with Valjean, whom he had saved and sheltered; with Gribier, who said to himself, “He saved me fifteen francs;” and with the convent, which, thanks to him, while keeping the coffin of Mother Crucifixion under the altar, eluded Caesar and sanctified God. There was a coffin with a body in it at the Little Picpus, and a coffin without a body in the Vaugirard cemetery; public

order was doubtless deeply affected by this, but no one was aware of the fact.

As for the convent, its gratitude to Fauchelevant was great; he became the best of servants and most precious of gardeners. On the archbishop's very next visit the prioress told the whole affair to his Grace, partly in confession, and partly in a boastful spirit. The archbishop, on leaving the convent, spoke of it with approval, and in a whisper, to M. de Latil, confessor to the king's brother, and afterward archbishop of Rheims and cardinal. The admiration felt for Fauchelevant travelled all the way to Rome, and we have seen a letter addressed by the then reigning pope, Leo XII., to one of his relatives, a Monsignor, in the house of the Paris Nuncio, and called like himself, Della Genga; in it were the following lines: "It appears that there is at a convent in Paris an excellent gardener, who is a holy man, by the name of Fauvent." Nothing of all this triumph reached Fauchelevant in his hut; he went on grafting, hoeing, and covering his melon-beds, quite unaware of his excellence and sanctity. He no more suspected his glory than does a Durham or Surrey steer whose portrait is published in the "London Illustrated News," with the inscription, "The ox that took the prize at the Cattle Show."

CHAPTER IX

IN THE CONVENT

COSETTE in the convent continued to be silent.

She naturally thought herself Valjean's daughter, but as she knew nothing, she could not tell nothing, and in any case would have told nothing, as we have remarked; for nothing trains children to silence like misfortune. Cosette had suffered so greatly that she feared everything, even to speak, even to breathe; for a word had so often brought down an

avalanche upon her! She had scarce begun to grow reassured since she had belonged to Valjean, but she very soon grew accustomed to the convent. The only thing she regretted was Catherine, but she did not dare say so; one day, however, she remarked to Valjean, "If I had known, I would have brought her with me."

Cosette, on becoming a boarder at the convent, was obliged to assume the garb of the pupils of the house. Jean Valjean begged and obtained the old clothes which she left off,—the same mourning clothes he had given her when he removed her from the Thénardiers, and they were not much worn.

He placed these clothes and her shoes and stockings, with a quantity of camphor and other odorous drugs with which convents abound, in a small valise which he managed to procure. He placed this valise on a chair by his bedside, and always had the key about him.

"Father," asked Cosette one day, "what is in that box which smells so nice?"

Father Fauchelevent, in addition to the glory we have described, and of which he was ignorant, was rewarded for his good deed: in the first place, he was happy; and in the second place, he had much less to do, owing to the division of labour; lastly, as he was very fond of snuff, he found M. Madeleine's presence an advantage, inasmuch as he took thrice as much as before, and in a far more voluptuous manner, because M. Madeleine paid for it.

The nuns did not adopt the name of Ultimus; they called Jean Valjean "the other Fauvent."

Had these holy women possessed Javert's clear sight, they must have noticed that when anything had to be procured for the garden from outside, it was always the elder Fauvent,—the cripple,—who went, and never the other; but either because eyes constantly fixed on God know not how to spy, or because they preferred to watch one another, they paid no attention to the fact.

However, Jean Valjean did quite right in keeping shy and

not stirring, for Javert watched that region for a whole month.

This convent was to Jean Valjean like an island surrounded by gulfs, and those four walls were henceforth the world for him; he saw enough of the sky to feel serene, and enough of Cosette to be happy. A very sweet life again began for him. He lived with old Fauchelevent in the hovel at the end of the garden. This lath-and-plaster tenement, which still existed in 1845, was composed of three rooms which had only the bare walls. The largest room was surrendered by force, for Valjean resisted in vain, by Father Fauchelevent to M. Madeleine. The wall of this room had for ornament, in addition to the two nails for hanging up the knee-cap and the basket, a royalist note for ten livres, date '93, fastened above the mantelpiece, of which a facsimile is given below. This bit of Vendean paper money had been



nailed to the wall by the previous gardener, a Chouan, who died in the convent, and was succeeded by Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean worked daily in the garden and was very useful. As he had once been a pruner, he was glad to become a gardener. It will be remembered that he had a great number of receipts and secrets, which he turned to profit. Nearly all the trees in the orchard were wild stocks; but he grafted them, and made them produce excellent fruit.

Cosette had permission to spend an hour daily with him;

and as the sisters were sad and he was kind, the child compared them and adored him. At the appointed hour she ran to the cottage, and when she entered, she filled it with paradise. Jean Valjean blossomed forth, and felt his own happiness grow with the happiness which he caused Cosette. The joy which we inspire has this charming thing about it, that far from being weakened, like ordinary reflections, it returns to us more radiant than before. In her hours of recreation, Jean Valjean watched her from a distance, playing and running, and distinguished her laugh from that of the others.

For Cosette now laughed.

Her face had also changed to a certain extent. It had lost its sombre look, for laughter is the sun which drives winter from the human face.

When Cosette returned to her studies, Jean Valjean watched the windows of her school-room, and at night would rise to gaze at the windows of her dormitory.

God has his inscrutable designs; and the convent contributed, like Cosette, to maintain and complete the bishop's work in Jean Valjean. It is certain that one side of virtue leads to pride, and there is a bridge built there by the demon. Jean Valjean was perhaps unconsciously very near this bridge when Providence threw him into the convent of the Little Picpus. So long as he had only compared himself with the bishop, he had found himself unworthy, and had been humble; but for some time past he had compared himself with men in general, and pride was growing up. Who knows whether he might not have ended by gradually returning to hatred?

The convent checked him on this downward path.

It was the second place of captivity which he had seen. In his youth, in what had been to him the dawn of life, and again very recently, he had seen another,—a frightful spot, a terrible spot,—whose severities had ever appeared to him to be the iniquity of justice and the crime of the law.

Now, after the hulks, he saw the convent; and reflecting that he had been a member of the galley, and was now, so to

speak, a spectator of the convent, he anxiously confronted them in his thoughts.

At times he leaned on his spade, and fell into a profound reverie.

He recalled his former comrades; how wretched they were! They rose at dawn and worked till night; they were scarce granted time to sleep; they lay on camp-beds and were only allowed mattresses two inches thick; their rooms were warmed only in the severest months of the year; they were dressed in hideous red jackets; they were allowed, as a great favour, linen trousers in the hottest weather, and a woollen blouse on their backs when it was very cold; they only ate meat and drank wine when they went on "fatigue duty;" they lived without names, designated solely by numbers, lowering their eyes, lowering their voices, with shorn hair, under the stick, and in disgrace.

Then his thoughts turned to the beings whom he had before him now.

These beings also lived with cropped hair, downcast eyes, and low voices, not in disgrace, but amid the mockery of the world; and if their backs were not bruised by a stick, their shoulders were lacerated by their discipline. Their names had vanished, too, among human beings, and they only existed under austere appellations. They never ate meat nor drank wine; they often went without food till night; they were dressed, not in a red jacket, but in a black woollen pall, heavy in summer and thin in winter, and were unable to reduce it or to add to it without the resource, according to the season, of a linen garment or a woollen cloak; they wore for six months in the year, serge chemises, which gave them fever. They slept, not in rooms warmed merely in the severe cold, but in cells where no fire was ever kindled. They slept, not on mattresses two inches thick, but on straw. Lastly, they were not even allowed to sleep; every night, after a day of labour, they were compelled to get up, in their first slumber, when they were just falling sound asleep and beginning to get warm, to dress themselves, and to go

and pray in a dark, freezing chapel with their knees upon the stones.

On certain days, moreover, each of these beings was obliged, in turn, to remain for twelve hours in a kneeling posture, or prostrate on the ground, with her arms extended like a cross, and her face on the pavement.

The former were men; the latter were women.

What had the men done? They had robbed, violated, plundered, killed, assassinated. They were bandits, forgers, poisoners, incendiaries, murderers and parricides. What had these women done? Nothing.

On one side, brigandage and fraud, cozening, violence, lubricity, homicide,— every sort of sacrilege, every variety of crime; on the other, only one thing,— innocence, perfect innocence, which was still attached to the earth by virtue, and already attached to heaven by holiness.

On one side, confessions of crimes exchanged in whispers; on the other, confessions of faults made aloud. And what crimes and what faults!

On one side, miasmas; on the other, an ineffable perfume. On one side, a mortal pestilence, closely guarded, held down by cannon, and slowly devouring its plague-stricken victims; on the other, a chaste kindling of all souls on the same hearth. There darkness, here shadow, but a shadow full of light, and light full of radiance.

Two places of slavery; but in the former there was a possible deliverance, a constantly visible legal limit, and, besides, escape; in the second, perpetuity, the only hope being that gleam of liberty which men call death, upon the extreme horizon.

In the former, people were only held by chains; in the latter, by faith.

What proceeded from the former? An immense curse, gnashing of teeth, hatred, desperate wickedness, a cry of rage against human society, and sarcasms hurled at Heaven.

What issued from the latter? Blessings, love.

And in these two places which were so similar, and yet so

dissimilar, these two species of beings, who were so unlike, underwent the same work of expiation.

Jean Valjean perfectly understood the expiation of the former,—that personal expiation, expiation for self; but he did not understand that other expiation,—the expiation of these creatures without reproach or stain; and he trembled as he asked himself, “ Expiation for what? ”

A voice answered in his conscience: “ The most divine proof of human generosity,— expiation for others.”

Here we lay aside any and every personal theory; we are only the narrator; we stand in Jean Valjean’s place, and translate his impressions.

He had before his eyes the sublime summit of abnegation, the highest possible pinnacle of virtue, that innocence which forgives men their faults, and expiates them in their place; servitude endured, torture accepted, punishment demanded by souls which have never sinned, that they may absolve souls which have erred; the love of humanity swallowed up in the love of God, but retaining its distinct and suppliant character; gentle, feeble beings who have the wretchedness of those who are punished, and the smile of those who are rewarded.

And he remembered that he had dared to complain.

He often rose in the middle of the night to listen to the grateful song of these innocent creatures, weighed down with severities, and his blood ran cold when he thought that men who were justly chastised only raised their voices to heaven to blaspheme, and that he, wretch as he was, had threatened God.

It was a striking thing, which made him reflect deeply, like a warning from Providence, that all the efforts he had made to escape from the other place of expiation, the climbing of that wall, the difficulties he had conquered, the dangerous adventures he had passed through at the risk of death, he had gone through again, to enter the present place. Was it a symbol of his destiny?

This house was a prison, too, and bore a mournful likeness

to that other abode from which he had fled; and yet he had never had such an idea here.

He saw again the bolts and iron bars,— to guard whom? Angels.

The lofty walls which he had seen around tigers, he saw again around lambs.

It was a place of expiation, and not of punishment, and yet it was even more austere, gloomy, and pitiless than the other. These virgins were more heavily burdened than the galley-slaves. A rough, cold wind,— the wind which had chilled his youth,— blew through the barred and padlocked cage of the vultures; but a sharper and more painful wind passed through the cot of these doves.

Why was this?

When he thought of these things, all within him bowed down before this mystery of sublimity.

In these meditations his pride vanished; he studied his own heart; he felt his own insignificance, and wept many times; all that had entered his life during the past six months had led him back to the bishop's holy injunctions,— Cosette by love, the convent by humility.

Sometimes, in the twilight, when the garden was deserted, he knelt before that window through which he had gazed on the night of his arrival, turned toward the spot where he knew that the sister who was making reparation lay prostrate in prayer. He prayed thus, kneeling before that sister.

It seemed as if he dared not kneel directly to God.

All that surrounded him,— the peaceful garden, the fragrant flowers, the children uttering merry cries, the grave and simple women, the silent cloisters,— slowly penetrated him, and gradually his soul became composed of silence like the cloister, of perfume like the flowers, of peace like the garden, of simplicity like those women, and of joy like those children. And then he thought how two houses of God had in turn received him at the two critical moments of his life,— the first, when all doors were closed and human society repulsed him; the second, when human society was again hunting him

down, and the hulks were yawning for him; and that had it not been for the former he should have relapsed into crime, and but for the latter, into torment.

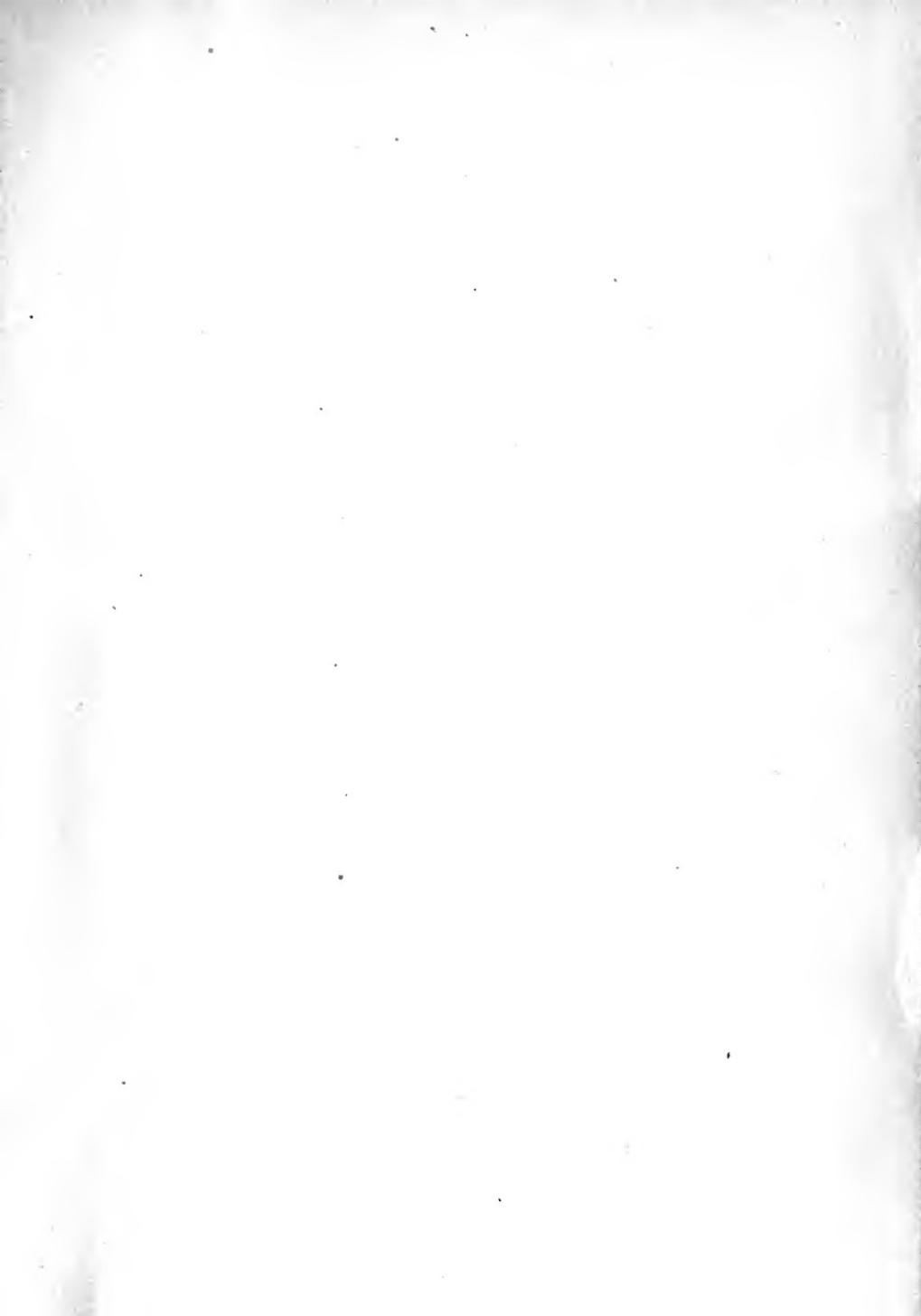
His whole heart melted in gratitude, and he loved more and more.

Several years passed thus, and Cosette grew.

END OF VOL. II.







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